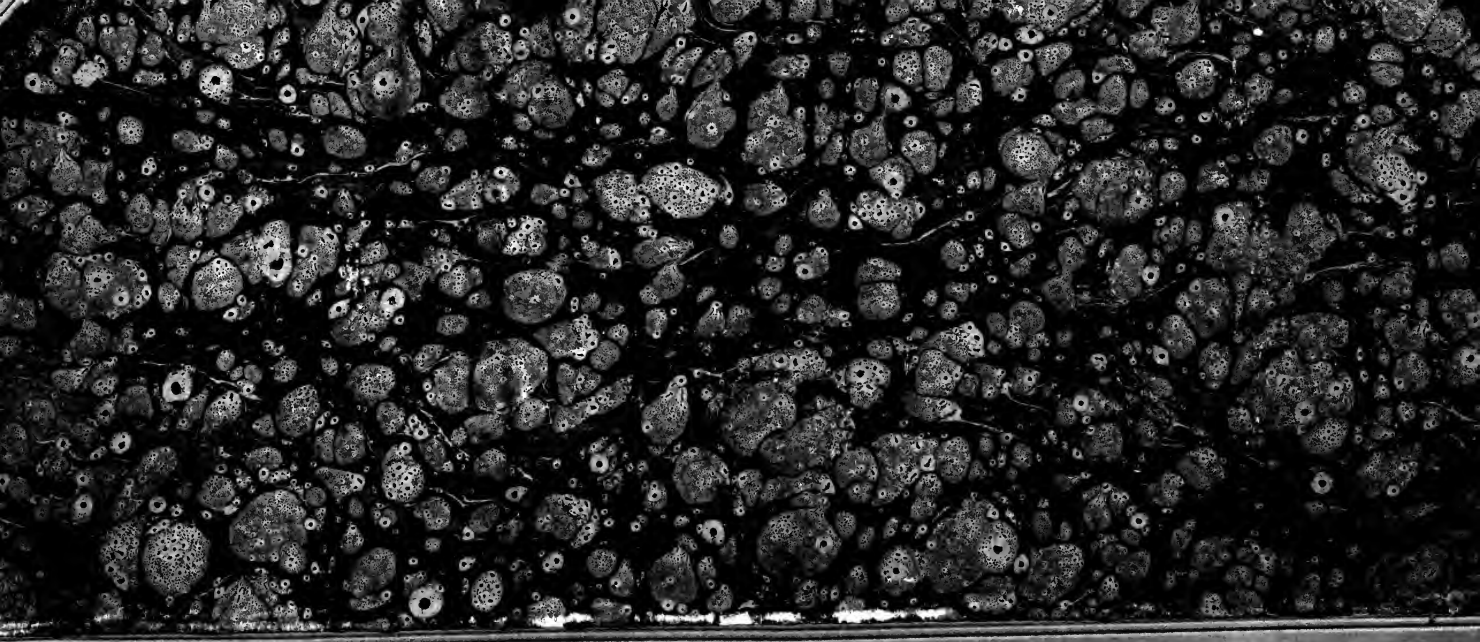

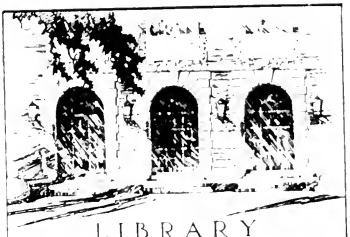
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SIX YEARS

OF

CONSERVATIVE

GOVERNMENT.

1874-79.

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CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT.

The Government of Lord Beaconsfield has now been in office six years, and the life of the Parliament which bore it to power approaches its end. In a few months, at the latest, the people will be called upon to say, whether the Government and the Parliamentary majority which has steadily supported it, continue to enjoy their confidence, or have, as Mr. Gladstone and the Opposition generally assert with a vehement iteration which rather betrays doubt than denotes assurance, discredited themselves in their eyes. Already preparations for the contest are being made on every side, and it may be useful, therefore, to take stock of the work of the Government during the six years it has been in office, to note how far it has fulfilled the expectations its assumption of power excited, and carried out the programme its leading members proclaimed when in Opposition. We propose to do this in the following pages, in which we shall describe in the plainest and most matter-of-fact style, making no assertion for which a complete voucher is not forthcoming in the records of Parliament or in official documents, first, the legislation for which the Government may claim credit or must be held responsible; next, the administrative measures which, of its own initiative, it has carried out; and, finally, the course which it has taken in those great questions of Imperial policy with which it has been called upon to deal.

In the address in which, upon the announcement of the dissolution of Parliament in January, 1874, Mr. Disraeli asked

the electors of Buckinghamshire to return him again as their member, he said—"I have ever endeavoured, and if returned to Parliament I shall, whether in or out of office, continue to endeavour, to propose or support all measures calculated to improve the condition of the people of this kingdom. But I do not think this great end is advanced by incessant or harassing legislation." And he concluded thus:—"The cause of civil and religious freedom mainly depends upon the strength and stability of England. I ask you to return me to the House of Commons to resist every proposal which may impair that strength, and to support by every means her Imperial sway." The policy which the Government has pursued was distinctly foreshadowed in these words of the Premier. It has done more than any Government England has ever had to improve the condition of the people. A comparison of the barren Sessions of the last Parliament, when the time of both Houses was devoted to heroic legislation, recommended as a universal panacea, but bearing no other fruit than disappointment and discontent, with the Sessions of the present Parliament, in which, despite the most factious Opposition our Parliamentary annals record, a number of great social reforms have been effected, which constitute a veritable charter of the poor, is the best evidence of its services in this respect. It has fallen behind no one of those older Governments of which Englishmen are proudest in maintaining our Imperial sway. We have but to look to the increase of English authority in India, to the growing attachment of, and closer union with, our Colonies, to the great augmentation of our influence throughout Europe and the world, to see how well the Government has maintained the power and prestige of England, and how steadily it has used them for the assertion of the great interests of humanity as well as of the particular interests of this country.

LEGISLATION OF 1874.—Although Mr. Gladstone, following the example set him by Mr. Disraeli in 1868, resigned as soon as it became evident that his party would be in a minority in the new House of

LICENSING ACT—FACTORIES ACT—RATING ACT—CHURCH PATRONAGE ACT (SCOTLAND)—ENDOWED SCHOOLS ACT.

Commons, it was not until the close of March—that is to say, six weeks later than usual—that Parliament could address itself to business. The new Ministers had little time to prepare measures for the consideration of the Legislature, but they nevertheless introduced and carried several Bills of a very useful if unassuming character. The general dissatisfaction which Lord Aberdare's Licensing Act had caused, as well amongst the general public as in the trade particularly affected by it, made it one of the first duties of the new Home Secretary, Mr. Cross, to present an amending Bill relieving the licensed victuallers of some of the more oppressive and degrading provisions of the Act, and diminishing the injudicious regulations which prevented the satisfaction of the legitimate wants of the public. That the measure, which was the subject of long debates, redressed all the injustice, and removed all the mischief of Lord Aberdare's Act, cannot be affirmed. But the new House of Commons was, almost as much as the old one, under the influence of the delusion that drunkenness prevails in proportion to the amount of public-house accommodation, and that consequently, by limiting the number of public-houses and closing them earlier, intemperance could be greatly diminished. Most people now recognise the fallacy of this theory, which has been vigorously attacked even by Mr. Lowe, who was a member of the Cabinet that supported with all its strength the original proposals of Lord Aberdare's Bill, which were far more stringent than those embodied in the Act. It is generally felt now that we must trust to moral means to check a vice which, curiously enough, has assumed its present serious dimensions since the first attempts at restrictive legislation of which Sir George Grey was the author. However, in 1874, the Government measure was the best that could be carried; and if it drew some hard and fast lines of which both our great and our small towns may legitimately complain, it undoubtedly removed the worst evils of the unjust and harsh legislation which branded a great trade with a disgraceful stigma, and condemned as responsible for the outrageous drunkenness of the country the very men whose interest it is to prevent all drinking that can become offensive to the public or provoke the interference

of the police—that is to say, the drunkenness with which alone Parliament can properly or with any hope of useful effect concern itself.

The only other measure of importance announced in the Queen's Speech was a Land Transfer Bill, which was introduced in good time by the Lord Chancellor, but was eventually withdrawn in the House of Commons. Several measures of considerable value, not mentioned in the Speech, were, however, introduced by the Government in the course of the Session, and became law. First of these we may put the Factories Act, the Home Secretary's first step in a career of singularly useful legislation. A measure with the same object, the reduction of the hours of work of women and children, and the better enforcement of the stipulations of previous Acts passed with this view, had been introduced by a private member. Mr. Cross was unable to accept this Bill, and undertook to bring forward one of his own, which was well received by Parliament, and passed into law with but little alteration. It fixed certain hours as those between which women and children might be employed. It prohibited their employment for more than four hours and a half without an interval for a meal. It secured them a rest of two hours during the day; and, finally, it prohibited the employment of children under the age of ten, and only permitted the employment of those above that age upon the production of certain educational certificates. The Rating Act, introduced by Mr. Sclater-Booth, the President of the Local Government Board, removed anomalies and injustices which had long been complained of. It provided for the rating of woodlands, of the rights of shooting, fishing, &c., and of mines of every kind which had hitherto escaped, because not mentioned in the Act of Elizabeth. In some respects, the most important of the measures passed in the Session of 1874 was the Church Patronage (Scotland) Act. This measure, introduced in the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond, himself one of the largest Church patrons, removed the appointment of ministers from the private and public patrons, providing a certain small compensation for such of the former class as might choose to claim it, and vested it in the congregation of each parish, under regulations to be framed

by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This measure, which was thoroughly approved by the Scotch Church, and heartily supported by most of the patrons whose rights it extinguished, was opposed by the advocates of Disestablishment upon the well-grounded belief that its result would be to strengthen the Scotch Church. Of course that was not the reason assigned for their opposition. But experience has shown that they fully appreciated the influence of the measure. The Church of Scotland has been greatly strengthened by legislation which gratifies the long-standing theories of the Scotch people, without in the slightest degree injuring private interests or weakening the connection of the Church with the State; and the position of the Church now appears so formidable to the non-conforming bodies of Scotland that they have, in the hope of maintaining their own relative position, embarked in a general agitation against Establishments. One other Act passed in the short Session of 1874 deserves a word of notice. It transferred the functions of the Endowed Schools' Commissioners, whose discharge of their duties had caused so much heart-burning throughout the country, and who had conceived themselves charged by the Liberal Government which appointed them with a mission to throw overboard the "pious founder," to the Charity Commissioners, who, it was assumed, would exercise their powers with fairness, in a judicious spirit of conciliation; and, above all, without any prejudices inducing them to put upon the Act of Parliament they administer an interpretation which strains and perverts its purpose.

REGIMENTAL EXCHANGES ACT—PEACE PRESERVATION ACT—CONSPIRACY AND PROTECTION OF PROPERTY ACT—MASTERS AND WORKMEN ACT—ARTISANS' DWELLINGS ACT—PUBLIC HEALTH ACT—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT—AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS ACT—UNSEAWORTHY SHIPS ACT.

LEGISLATION OF 1875.—In the first session of the new Parliament the Liberals were still too much overwhelmed by their crushing and unexpected defeat at the General Election to make any party fight. The measures of the Government, although some of them, as we have shown, of an important character, were hardly political in their nature, and the Opposition leaders and managers were still too new to their position to employ the factious arts to which Liberals out

of place always resort. When Parliament met, however, in 1875, it was soon evident that no pains would be spared by the Opposition to impede the progress of the Government measures, and to endeavour by a policy of delay to waste the Session, and so discredit the Government. Mr. Gladstone came to the aid of Lord Hartington and Mr. Lowe, and the Liberal leaders were strenuously assisted in this policy of delay by the Home Rule party, some of the members of which showed a power of obstruction fully equal to that exhibited of old time by the O'Connells and the Scullys, with only this difference, that the Irish obstructives of former days were educated and able men. Among the first measures presented to Parliament was the Regimental Exchanges Bill, the purpose of which was to authorise exchanges between officers upon full pay upon condition of money payments. Lord Cardwell, in abolishing purchase, had left it free to officers to exchange, for he allowed the absolute necessity of such a permission, but had prohibited the payment of any consideration by the officer who desired, say, not to stay in, or not to proceed to, India, beyond a sum to be fixed by the War Office for outfit and passage to India, and consequently had practically put a stop to a very useful arrangement. Mr. Hardy's Bill proposed to allow officers exchanging to arrange their own terms, subject, of course, to regulations against abuse. The Bill was passed, but it was opposed in the most factious manner by the Opposition leaders. They debated and divided upon it at every stage, and altogether succeeded in occupying five or six Government nights—that is to say, practically three weeks of Government time. Even greater offenders in this matter of factious waste of time were the Home Rulers. The Peace Preservation Acts, without which Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, in spite of the messages of peace they had borne to Ireland in the plunder of the Church and the landlords, had found it impossible to govern the country, expired in the course of 1875. The Government proposed, in the Session of 1874, to continue them in the Expiring Laws' Continuance Bill,—the only possible course, as the necessity of the exceptional powers they gave the Executive was still evident, to be taken in so short a Session; but Mr.

Disraeli recognised the justice of the claim made by the Irish members that measures imposing upon Ireland such exceptional restrictions should be directly presented to Parliament, and that, too, at an early period of the Session. The Peace Preservation Bill, introduced by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in accordance with this undertaking of the Premier, on the 1st of March, consolidated the various Acts known by the general title of Peace Preservation Acts, and re-enacted, with many material alleviations, their principal provisions. The Home Rulers did not receive the redemption of the Prime Minister's pledge in the spirit in which they should have met it. That they should have insisted upon full and complete discussion was natural and legitimate, but that did not content them. They used every device to delay the passage of the Bill. They talked against time; they interposed frivolous amendments at every stage of the measure, and, although nominally discountenanced by the leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Whips, they could always secure long and sympathetic speeches from the Radical benches, when there seemed to be a chance of wasting another of the few days which the rules of Parliament give the Government during the earlier part of the Session. The Bill, which might have been fully and exhaustively discussed in two evenings at the utmost, was so contested by the Home Rule faction, that it occupied twelve Government nights—that is to say, as the Government has but two nights a week at the commencement of the Session, six weeks of the some twenty or odd in which Government measures must be discussed and carried, and the main business of Parliament, the voting of Estimates and the grant of Supplies, must be transacted.

Perhaps the most important measures passed through Parliament in the Session so grossly wasted by these factious proceedings of the Opposition—and yet, as will be seen, so rich in legislation for the improvement of the condition of the people—were the Bills in which Mr. Cross dealt with the questions, which at the time he entered office were exciting so much attention, of the respective rights of employers and workmen, and of the procedure by which their disputes should be decided. In the Speech from the Throne in which the Session of 1874 was opened, a Royal Commission to

inquire into the state of the law was promised ; and in 1875, Mr. Cross introduced the Bills of which we have spoken. Their general effect was to relieve of a criminal character any combination to do an act which would not have been criminal if done by one person, thus relieving working men of the most serious consequences of the law of conspiracy as interpreted by some of the judges ; and to substitute civil for criminal proceedings in the disputes between masters and workmen in questions where a breach of contract was asserted. The new laws have given satisfaction to the working classes, who feel themselves relieved from exceptional and unjust legislation, and have done no damage to the employers. The provisions of the Act for the protection of workmen against intimidation on the part of their companions on strike have been proved quite sufficient ; and, upon the whole, Mr. Cross's Acts must be regarded as effecting one of the most timely, wholesome, and successful reforms of the law which have been achieved during the last twenty or thirty years.

Besides settling in a manner so generally satisfactory these vexed questions between employers and workmen, Mr. Cross introduced and carried a measure the full fruits of which are not yet visible, but which promises to do more to remove disease, diminish intemperance, and generally elevate the condition of the poorest section of the working classes than any Act which has been passed by the British Parliament. The Artisans' Dwellings Act enables the municipal and other local authorities of our large towns, if satisfied by official representations of the unhealthiness of any district, to make a scheme for its improvement—which scheme consists in removing the buildings already standing on the spot, and a provision for replacing them by others, which are to be designed for, and employed as, dwellings for artisans and others of small means, at the direct cost of the local authority, or by arrangement between it and persons, societies, or companies willing to erect such dwellings. Great care, too much care perhaps, is taken to protect the legitimate interests of the persons whose property is to be dealt with, and to prevent the local authorities from entering upon extravagant schemes likely to throw excessive burdens upon the ratepayers. It was objected to the Bill at the time by critics

who, if it had contained provisions enforcing its adoption upon every town, would have denounced it as tyrannical, confiscating, and wasteful, that because it was not compulsory it would be inoperative; but experience has fully justified the confidence which Mr. Cross declared that he put in our municipal corporations and in local self-government. The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Corporation of the City of London, the Corporations of Birmingham and of many other of our largest towns, have submitted to the Home Office great schemes of improvement, for the destruction of the worst of these dens of misery, fever, and crime, which form the great obstacle to the inculcation of sobriety and the rescue of the very poor from wholesale degradation; and although the great cost of the clearance of the sites, due to the principle upon which the compensation to the owners was reckoned, and the rigid devotion of the whole of the cleared ground to the erection of dwellings for artisans and labourers, have made the adoption of these improvements very expensive to the ratepayers, much good work has been done, and with the facilities given by the Amendment Act of 1879, much more rapid progress will now be made in carrying out the intentions of Parliament. Other Bills, giving effect to Mr. Disraeli's declaration at Manchester in the Easter of 1873, that the first consideration of a Minister should be the health of the people, and the apothegm over which so many cheap jokes were made—*Sanitas sanitatum omnia sanitas* —were also introduced by the Government in the Session of 1875; as the Rivers' Pollution Bill—which, although it passed the House of Lords in the spring, had to be withdrawn in the Commons—and the Public Health Bill, which met with better fortune. The Public Health Act, although in the first place a measure to consolidate the Sanitary Acts, contained many improvements and additions to these Acts, increasing the powers and extending the attributes of the local authorities, and in a most useful manner adding to the authority of the Local Government Board.

The Friendly Societies Act was another important measure of the Session, directed, as those we have already enumerated, to improve the condition of the people. Sir Stafford Northcote had

been Chairman of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the condition of these most important Societies, and he was able to frame a Bill which happily united the two necessary conditions of any wholesome legislation upon such a subject—the utmost possible independence and self-management of the different Societies, with the best working provisions for insuring sound rules, judicious management, sufficient rates of payment to maintain the solvency of the Societies, combined with an effective audit. Much more has been obtained by this careful regard for the independence of the Societies than could possibly have been achieved by the establishment of any cast-iron system of Government rules and inspection, the almost inevitable result of which would have been the loss of half the inducements these Societies offer to the working man, and of the whole of that large training for municipal and political life which the management of the Societies by their members gives to so many hundreds of thousands of artisans. The great Societies have set their houses in order, have corrected their original tables, which, defective and dangerous as they were, had been accepted in perfect good faith as sufficient; and if there are any Societies which still rest upon an insecure basis, the annual return of income and expenditure, and the quinquennial returns of assets and liabilities and of mortality, required by the Act, will force them to adapt their system of contributions and of management to that of the admittedly solvent Societies. The Agricultural Holdings Act was one of the measures introduced and carried by the Government in this Session. When the Bill was under consideration it was denounced, like the Artisans' Dwellings Act, for its permissive nature—that is to say, because it allowed, as it was essential it should do, any owner and would-be occupier of land to contract themselves out of its provisions. It was not the intention of its authors to interfere with any contracts into which landlords and tenants might freely enter. Their object was to give general force to particular customs, allowing a tenant compensation for his outlay, and to create a presumption of law in his favour. They gave every tenant compensation for unexhausted improvements, regulating the determination of what should be considered unexhausted improvements by comparatively clear and simple rules, and whilst thus protecting the investments

of the tenant, they equally protected the landlord against costly and unnecessary expenditure under the name of improvements. No doubt many landlords have contracted themselves out of the Act, and, indeed, on estates where leases are the rule the Act is necessarily inapplicable; but the tenant farmers, who were at first dissatisfied with the measure, now see that it has given them all they could reasonably ask, and the only complaints now made of its inadequacy come not from tenant farmers, but from an Association which pretends indeed, but without any authorisation, to speak in their name, and which is really only an organisation to promote the return of Liberal candidates for English counties at the coming General Election.

Amongst other measures of importance passed in this Session, we should mention the Land Transfer and Titles Act, the value of which is admitted on all sides; the Public Works' Loans Act, of which we can speak more conveniently when we discuss the financial policy of the Government; and the Unseaworthy Ships Act. At a very early period of the Session, Sir Charles Adderley had introduced a very comprehensive Merchant Shipping Acts' Amendment Bill, intended to protect our sailors against the sometimes careless and sometimes criminal conduct of a certain class of shipowners. Mr. Plimsoll, the member for Derby, had in his energetic agitation of the question not only provoked a great popular feeling in favour of some stringent legislation for this purpose, but shown a very strong case for it. The Government Bill, although not going so far as Mr. Plimsoll's proposals, would have given sailors all the protection that could be given them, whilst it abstained from excessive and mischievous interference with the course of trade. The measure naturally occupied a good many days. Amendments were proposed on all sides, some intended to reduce the measure of interference and regulation, some designed to extend and intensify it. There still remained a great number of amendments, threatening several days' more debate in Committee, upon the 22nd of July, and the Government was therefore compelled, in order not to sacrifice other measures further advanced in their progress, to withdraw the Bill. A short measure was, however, introduced and

carried, which, under the title of the Unseaworthy Ships Act, redressed the worst grievances of the sailor. It provided for the detention of unseaworthy ships ; imposed penalties for sending them to sea; regulated the carriage of grain cargoes, by providing that the grain should be contained in bags, sacks, or barrels, or be secured from shifting by boards, bulkheads, &c.; imposed upon the ship-owner the obligation to the crew, in spite of any agreement to the contrary, to use all reasonable efforts to insure the seaworthiness of the ship; and required a load-line to be marked upon all ships above a certain tonnage, with the exception of yachts and coasting vessels.

LEGISLATION OF 1876.—The Session of 1876 was marked by even more factious conduct on the part of the Opposition than was shown in 1875. The keynote of the policy of the Liberal leaders was struck in the reception they gave to the Royal Titles Bill, a measure enabling the Queen to recognise the transfer of the government of India from the trustees who held it for her, the East India Company, to her own direct administration. Twenty years had passed since this change of government, but no special occasion had offered for the formal assumption by Her Majesty of a title emphatically asserting her sovereignty over India, until the visit of the Prince of Wales to that country. It had long been felt by those Indian officials most conversant with the native feeling, that it was desirable that the Queen should distinctly proclaim India a part of her dominions ; and the opportunity given by the visit of the Prince—fruitful, as we have every reason to believe, of the happiest results for India and England—was wisely made use of. The Bill was generally welcomed, and the Liberal newspapers applauded it until they found that the Liberal leaders intended to oppose it tooth and nail. It was opposed first on the ground that it was unnecessary, but the chief argument urged against it was the title which it was understood Her Majesty would, if the Bill were passed, assume. The Opposition fought against the word "Empress," as if they thought some evil

ROYAL TITLES ACT—INCLOSURE OF COMMONS ACT—POLLUTION OF RIVERS ACT—APPELLATE JURISDICTION ACT—MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT—ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT.

spell lay hid in its letters. They resorted to means to oppose the Bill for which no precedent can be found in the worst annals of Liberal intrigue. They trotted out the old hacks of Radical agitation, and got up indignation meetings against the measure, on the ground that it would enslave the people of England. They divided at every stage of the Bill, and did not even scruple to snatch a division on the third reading, after the persons responsible in such a matter had informed the Government that no division would be taken. Mr. Robert Lowe, who made himself conspicuous in the opposition to the Bill, even ventured to declare at a Radical dinner that the Queen had pressed two previous Prime Ministers to introduce such a measure, but that they had refused, and that it was now brought forward because a more pliant individual had been found. When asked to explain his statement in the House of Commons, Mr. Lowe refused, and received the severest chastisement from Mr. Disraeli. The Premier, after characterising in well-deserved terms the conduct of the member for the University of London, declared, on the authority of the Queen, that there was not the slightest foundation for these allegations. A day or two after, Mr. Lowe confessed that there was not the slightest foundation for his statements, and that if there had been any foundation for them, he ought not to have made them. Mr. Lowe's humiliation was complete; but it does not appear from the subsequent action of the Liberal party that he has in any degree lost such influence and authority as he possessed with it by his admission that he had wantonly and maliciously calumniated the Queen in the hope of gaining a paltry political advantage. The opposition was continued in the House of Lords in much the same fashion, but the Bill was carried by enormous majorities, and became law with the general approval of the country. Her Majesty consequently assumed the style and title of Empress of India, and on the 1st of January, 1877, her new title was officially proclaimed, with every circumstance of pomp and state, at Delhi, in the presence of the Viceroy, and of the independent, the allied, and the tributary Princes of India.

Although in the factious opposition to the Royal Titles Bill

much time was wasted, the Government succeeded in carrying most of the measures it introduced. The Inclosure of Commons Act fairly settles a difficult question. It does not impede the inclosure of commons under circumstances in which that inclosure is a public as well as a private advantage, and sets again in motion the regular machinery for inclosure which had for some time previous been absolutely stopped. On the other hand, it takes stringent precautions to protect not only the rights, but the interests of the public, securing free access to the best points of view of any common, the preservation of objects of historical interest, the privilege of playing games, &c., where a recreation-ground is not reserved; and makes special provision for the health and amusement of the people in the case of what are called suburban commons. The Pollution of Rivers Act was a measure of even greater importance, the beneficial effects of which can hardly be estimated too highly. The measure deals with the three kinds of pollution which it was necessary to prevent. The first kind, the introduction into rivers of solid matter, it prohibits absolutely and immediately—a reform which only those who know how our streams have been choked up and defiled by the direct discharge into them of solid matter, or by placing it where, in the event of the stream rising above its banks, it must be carried off, can fully appreciate. The second kind of pollution, that by sewage, is dealt with as radically as possible. There is to be no fresh contamination from this source, and all local authorities which, at the time of the passing of the Act, have been in the habit of getting rid of sewage in this way, are required to at once take measures to render the liquid they may discharge into any stream inodorous and inoffensive. Any increase of the third kind of pollution, that by manufactures, is prevented; and all manufacturers are subjected to penalties, unless they can show that they are taking the best practicable and available means at a reasonable cost to render harmless the liquid that flows from their works.

The Appellate Jurisdiction Act settled in a most satisfactory manner the controversy as to the composition of the Highest Court of Appeal. It restored to the House of Lords the

jurisdiction taken from it, so far as regarded England, by the Judicature Act of 1873; strengthening the House as an Appeal Court by the appointment of two Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, whose duties are to attend the sittings of the House as the Tribunal of Appeal, and who, as long as they hold their offices, enjoy all the privileges of peers. Their rank is conferred upon them for their lives, their seat in the House is attached to their office, and their position is therefore not that of life peers, but rather of bishops, or barons holding by tenure. The Act contains other valuable provisions for intermediate Courts of Appeal, and is generally accepted as a very happy settlement of the question. The Merchant Shipping Act re-enacted the principal provisions of the Unseaworthy Ships Act, with many amendments extending the protection given by that measure to our sailors, and improving the procedure by which it is obtained. The legitimate interests of the shipowners are not lost sight of. An appeal is provided against decisions which they may consider unjust, and the Board of Trade is made liable in damages for any mistakes it may make, or any injustice it may commit; the so-called voluntary load-line enacted in the Unseaworthy Ships Act is extended to coasting vessels; and, finally, a prohibition is put upon deck-loading during the winter months.

Among the useful measures of this Session we may mention the Crossed Cheques Act, introduced by the Lord Chancellor, giving to special and general crossings of cheques the validity which the public had supposed to attach to them, but which recent decisions of the Courts of Law had denied them; and the Winter Assizes Act of Mr. Cross, remedying the hardship which used to be sustained by prisoners lying for trial in a county where the amount of criminal business to be done did not appear to warrant a winter assize. Under the new Act, prisoners for trial in one county can be tried at the assize held in another. The Bishopric of Truro Act authorised the subdivision of the very extensive Diocese of Exeter, and, with the Act founding the Bishopric of St. Albans, passed in 1875, added two to the number of the English Bishops.

The most important measure of the Session was, however,

the Act amending the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which did justice to the denominational schools, and reconciled, as far as could be done, the enforcement upon parents of the duty of educating their children, with a just regard for the rights of conscience. The measure was hotly contested by the political Dissenters and secular educationists, whose common object is to get rid of all religious instruction in our elementary schools—the former, because that religious instruction is calculated to strengthen the hold of the Church of England upon the people; the latter, because they are rabidly hostile to all religion, or, at the best, consider it as an indifferent matter. The Act asserts, in the first place, the duty of every parent to provide for the education of his children—the first declaration of that duty in English law. It entrusts the duty of enforcing this declaration in a School Board district to the School Board; in boroughs which have no School Boards, to a Committee appointed by the Town Council, and in other parishes by the Guardians of the Union. In the case of these latter parishes, however, the power of making compulsory bye-laws is only to be exercised upon the requisition of the parish. There are provisions prohibiting absolutely the employment of children under ten, and prohibiting the employment of children between ten and fourteen, except they have passed a particular standard and produce certificates showing a certain number of attendances at school. Boards of Guardians are allowed to pay the school fees for such parents as may not be paupers, but are nevertheless too poor to pay the fees; and the famous 25th clause of the Act of 1870 is repealed. By the Act of 1870, the Parliamentary Grant was never to exceed the amount of the school income derived from rates, fees, or voluntary subscriptions. This rule, which had no relation to the efficiency of the school, pressed very hardly upon many of the voluntary schools, and threatened in a short time to destroy some of the best and most needed of them. By the Act of 1876, it is provided that the Parliamentary Grant is not to be reduced, by reason of its excess over the income of the school, below the sum of seventeen shillings and sixpence per child, which is the sum that a child, who fulfils all the requirements of the Govern

ment, can earn. In future, therefore, although no school can receive the Parliamentary Grant which is not an efficient school, providing the education which the Department from time to time requires, schools which are efficient will not be punished for their poverty, and denied the contribution from the State, which they have fairly earned, simply because they have most urgent need of it. The change in the law is so just and expedient that it seems marvellous that it should have been so stubbornly resisted. Other clauses of the Act allow School Boards to establish day industrial schools, and provide for the dissolution of School Boards under certain circumstances. The latter clause, which was not in the Government measure, but was accepted by Lord Sandon, when proposed by Mr. Pell, was most passionately resisted by the Opposition, who pretended to see in it an attempt to get rid of School Boards generally. As, however, in point of fact, a School Board can only be dissolved when it has done nothing, and consequently shown that it is unnecessary, and then only by the vote of the district, the outcry was very ridiculous, and was treated as such by the country. Upon the whole, the Act must be considered one of the most valuable passed in the present Parliament, entitling the Government to the hearty confidence not only of Conservatives, but of all men who believe that religious instruction should be a part, and a most important part, of education.

PRISONS ACTS—UNIVERSITIES ACT—SOUTH AFRICA ACT—ARMY PROMOTION AND RETIREMENT ACT—JUSTICES' CLERKS ACT—CANAL BOATS ACT—OBSTRUCTION.

LEGISLATION OF 1877.—A large portion of the time which the wearisome, and for the most part factious, debates upon questions of foreign policy left to the Government in the Session of 1877 for the promotion of the Bills it had introduced, was occupied by two *remanets* of the previous Session—the Prisons Bill and the Universities Bill.

The English Prisons Bill occupied twelve, and the Universities Bill ten, sittings of the House of Commons, the principal part of the time so occupied being taken up in both cases, not by the discussion of the points of detail really before the House, but by the iteration of general objections to the principle of the Bills,

or by absurd attempts to give them a character it was never intended they should assume. Both Bills became law, and are now generally accepted as among the most valuable of recent additions to the Statute Book. The Prisons Acts—for the English Act was supplemented by Acts for Scotland and Ireland—insure uniformity in the treatment of prisoners throughout the United Kingdom, or at least throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively; making, what was before far from the case, a sentence carried into effect in one gaol equivalent to the same sentence carried into effect in another, and relieve the ratepayers of a very considerable charge at a comparatively small cost to the Treasury, the difference in outlay being caused by the economy incident to central and uniform management. The Universities Act, whilst interfering as little as possible with the discretion of the Universities and Colleges, enables them to appropriate their revenues in a manner which, it is hoped, will be more useful, and which in general opinion is considered more expedient.

Another measure which occupied a very large amount of the time of the House of Commons was the South Africa Act. There was nothing in the measure itself to provoke the opposition it received. Its purpose was simply to enable any two or more of our South African colonies to unite themselves in a Confederation, and to provide the general framework of the constitution of such a union. No attempt was made to force any colony into the union, but the general conditions of any combination were laid down. If any opposition could have been fairly made to the measure, it would have been on the part of the colonists, who might have objected, with some show of reason, to the reservation of all laws dealing with native affairs for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure. But those members of the House of Commons who might have been supposed to speak best the opinion of the colonists, made not the slightest objection to this wise and necessary restriction upon the powers of the Legislature of the New Dominion. Such opposition as the measure experienced on its merits, came from two or three members who had undertaken the case of the Transvaal delegates sent to London to protest against the annexation of the Republic—a question which, strictly speaking, had little or

nothing to do with a measure which was substantially only a licence to the South African colonies to unite in a Confederation. The great delay in the passage of the Bill was caused by the deliberate system of obstruction to all public business adopted by the extreme wing of the Home Rule party, and secretly encouraged by a section of the English and Scotch Radicals. These Irish members hardly pretended to have any interest in the Cape colonies. Their avowed purpose was to stop all public business, and they used every device which the rules of Parliament allowed. They were, in the end, vanquished with their own weapons; the House of Commons sat from four o'clock one afternoon to six o'clock the next to make progress with this Bill, and it further adopted (upon the proposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer) certain standing orders, to which the House itself seems not to have attached much importance, and which certainly have not proved of much value. The great difficulty in the way of dealing with misconduct of this kind consists in the natural unwillingness of the House to impose greater restrictions upon the freedom of its members than have prevailed before, and to diminish the legitimate opportunities of those who will not abuse them, in order to check the extravagances of a class of members who could hardly be dealt with effectually except by expulsion.

Another measure carried by the Government was the Army Promotion and Retirement Act. Lord Cardwell and his colleagues promised, when purchase was abolished, that a flow of promotion as rapid as that which existed before should be kept up. It was but just to the officers of the Army, and it was essential to the efficiency of the Service, that this should be done; but the Gladstone Government, in its usual fashion, neglected the duty because its fulfilment would have cost money, and so have increased the Army Estimates. Mr. Hardy (now Viscount Cranbrook), when he entered upon office, appointed a Commission to inquire into the matter, and upon its report prepared the scheme embodied in this Act, involving an immediate annual expenditure of £220,000. In future years the amount will be increased. The outlay, however, is not only just, but necessary; and very few Liberals ventured to contest the wisdom of the measure, which passed with

very little opposition, although, in addressing their constituents, they all treat the additional charge upon the revenue which it involves as a piece of Tory extravagance. Amongst the Government measures of smaller importance passed in the Session were two which deserve mention. The Justices' Clerks Act enacted that salaries should everywhere be paid to Justices' clerks in lieu of fees—a reform of far more importance than it appears, because it removes the feeling which very often obtained amongst the persons brought before Petty Sessions, that they sometimes had injustice done them in the magistrates' care for the interest of their clerks. The Canal Boats Act provided for the inspection and the proper sanitary regulation of these boats, as to the condition of which most horrible revelations had been made.

A number of other measures were introduced, and, after advancing certain stages, withdrawn. One of these Bills deserves special notice. We refer to the Burials Acts' Consolidation Bill, introduced in the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond and Gordon. This Bill, although in its main features a sanitary measure, would have removed every possible grievance of which Dissenters can complain, whilst consolidating the different Burial Acts, as to the contradictory character and confusing condition of which strong expressions had fallen from many of the Judges. It proposed to establish in every parish a burial authority, charged with the duty of providing a new burial-ground, unless there should be already a consecrated and unconsecrated burial-ground suitable and sufficient. By this provision, which was supplemented by a clause enabling landowners to give land for burial-grounds, every cause of complaint of the conscientious Dissenter from the Established Church was removed. He could be buried with the services of the Church or without them, as he pleased; or, in the event of his giving no directions as to the disposition of his remains, in such manner as his relatives might desire. But this did not suit the political Dissenters, who want to obtain an entry into the churchyard to act there as they please, in order from that vantage position to attempt to obtain the same rights in the Church itself. The Opposition, assisted by some of the Bishops, whose policy seems to have been to buy a temporary peace by

concessions which only encourage and facilitate fresh attacks, carried a clause which opened all burial-grounds without exception, no matter how recently given by Churchmen to the Church, not merely for the burial of Dissenters conscientiously objecting to be interred according to the rites of the Church of England without ceremony, but for the burial of Dissenters and Atheists with any ceremony or pomp their friends might please to indulge in. The Government could not, of course, accept an amendment which practically exposed the churchyards to the possibility of scenes of the grossest irreverence and wildest disorder, and therefore they withdrew the Bill.

LEGISLATION OF 1878.—Parliament met in 1878 some three weeks earlier than usual, and the Session only ended on the 16th of August, but although the number of days nominally at the disposition of the Government was therefore considerably larger than in ordinary Sessions, which begin in the second week of February and terminate in the last week in July, the time available for the consideration of Government business was really less than in the shorter Sessions. Parliament was called together earlier because the critical condition of foreign affairs rendered it necessary for the Government to apply to the House of Commons for a Vote of Credit; and discussions upon foreign questions, and the policy of the Government with regard to them, occupied a very considerable number of the nights which the rules of the House of Commons set apart for Government business. In spite, however, of this appropriation of time and the general preoccupation of the public in foreign questions, and of a repetition by a section of the Home Rule party, upon a somewhat smaller scale, of the obstructive tactics of the previous year, several Government measures of the greatest value were passed, and the Session of 1878 will compare almost as advantageously as those of 1875 and 1876 with the fruitless Sessions when Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS ACT—BISHOPRICS ACT—CONTAGIOUS DISEASES (ANIMALS) ACT—IRISH INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION ACT—TERRITORIAL WATERS JURISDICTION ACT—HIGHWAYS ACT—EPPING FOREST ACT — SCOTCH EDUCATION ACT — SCOTCH ROADS AND BRIDGES ACT.

occupied the whole time of Parliament with schemes for destroying Churches, despoiling landowners, and confiscating the property of traders, and with Budgets which imposed unnecessary and unjust taxation in order to provide artificial surpluses.

Among the first of the measures introduced and passed was the Factories and Workshops Act, the main purpose of which was the consolidation of the various and sometimes conflicting laws for the protection of women and children then upon the Statute Book, but which in many important instances materially amended those laws. The measure was discussed at much length in the House of Commons, and many compliments were paid to Mr. Cross by his political opponents, but the most valuable tribute to the right hon. gentleman, and the most satisfactory description of the measure, came from Lord Shaftesbury, who, in the House of Lords, after expressing his gratitude to the Government for the Bill, said that he was lost in wonder at the amount of toil, of close investigation, and of perseverance which the Home Secretary must have brought to bear upon its preparation. Some two millions of people in this country, he added, bless the day when that right hon. gentleman was appointed Secretary of State for the Home Department. Another measure of much value was the Bishoprics Act, described by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the greatest ecclesiastical reform since the Reformation, which was vehemently opposed in both Houses by Liberals who profess to remain in communion with the Church, or rather claim to be members of it solely with the purpose of more effectively damaging it. But Lord Rosebery and Mr. Dillwyn—most significant representatives of the opposition the Bill experienced—were signally defeated; and it depends now only upon the liberality of Churchmen how soon four new Bishoprics, every one of which is sorely needed, shall be established at Liverpool, Newcastle, Wakefield, and Southwell. All parties in the Church—that is to say, all parties anxious to increase its power of doing good—recognise the necessity of an increase in the number of Bishops, and the present Government, which had before carried through Parliament measures establishing the sees of Truro and St. Albans, and has thus added six to the number of episcopal sees, deserves the

confidence and support of all true and zealous Church men.

The Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act has, it may be hoped, settled once for all the questions which recent visitations of cattle plague, and other infectious diseases hardly less destructive, have raised. The Bill, which was founded upon the investigations of a Select Committee appointed in 1877, was discussed at much length, and was materially altered in its passage through the two Houses. It establishes a central instead of a local control in all cases in which an outbreak of disease takes place; and whilst the restrictions upon the movement of cattle within the country are stringent enough to check the propagation of disease, the precautions taken against the importation of infected beasts, although not so complete as some high agricultural authorities desired, seem to be sufficient to prevent the introduction of disease, whilst they put no inconvenient check upon the supply of meat to our populous towns. In one respect, the most important measure of the Session was the Irish Intermediate Education Act. The absolute want of a good system of intermediate or secondary education in Ireland has long been recognised as an evil to be remedied. The measure introduced by Earl Cairns to supply this want judiciously avoided the rocks upon which all previous schemes for the higher education in Ireland have been wrecked. Substantially, the measure is one of payment for results. A million is taken from the property of the disestablished Irish Church, the interest of which is to be applied partly to the provision of exhibitions and other prizes for the successful competitors in examinations open to all students, and partly to payments to the managers of such schools as the examinations show to be efficient. The measure was welcomed by all parties in Ireland, and met with little or no opposition in Parliament. It was generally felt not only that the outlay would raise the condition of education in Ireland, but that the promotion of education was a far more appropriate application of the property of the disestablished Church than the reduction of the rates, as proposed by Mr. Gladstone.

Several other measures, not of the same political importance, but of much utility, were passed in the Session of 1878. We

may specify the Territorial Waters' Jurisdiction Act, which supplies a want in English law which only became apparent in the judgment in the case of the *Franconia*, and enacts that any person, whether a subject of Her Majesty or not, who may commit an offence punishable by English law within English territorial waters—that is to say, within three miles from the shore—may be arrested and tried in the usual way; the Highways Act, which provides for the better management of the roads, and distributes more fairly the cost of maintaining them; the Epping Forest Act, which finally secures the enjoyment of several thousand acres to the closely-packed denizens of the East of London; and, finally, the Scotch Education and the Scotch Roads and Bridges Act, both of which occupied a considerable portion of the time of Parliament, and both of which seem to have satisfied the Scotch people.

The measures passed in the Session of 1878, numerous and useful as they were, give, however, no fair idea of the programme of legislation which the Government had prepared for Parliament. The block of business caused by the frequent and long debates upon foreign policy, and the obstructive proceedings of the Home Rulers, rendered it necessary to withdraw not only the Valuation of Property Bill, the Bankruptcy Law Amendment Bill, the Bar Education and Discipline Bill, and other measures which had undergone the same fate the previous Session, but several others of importance and interest. The Criminal Code Bill, prepared by Sir James Stephen under the supervision of the Law Officers of the Crown, and intended to express in one Act the whole law and procedure relating to indictable offences, was read a second time, but there was no chance of giving it that consideration in Committee which a measure of so much importance demanded, and the Government withdrew it, to refer it to the examination of a Commission composed of Lord Blackburn, Mr. Justice Lush, Mr. Justice Barry, and the author. The County Government Bill, which proposes to substitute County Boards, to be elected in part by the Guardians and in part by the Magistrates, for Quarter Sessions, in so far as County Government is concerned, led to a great deal of debate; and it is quite certain that no Bill proposing to

transfer from the Magistrates functions which they have exercised on the whole so well, and so economically, can give satisfaction unless a very large amount of time is devoted to its details. The Grand Jury Law Amendment Bill, introduced by the Irish Secretary, was intended to transfer that portion of the Local Government of Ireland now vested in the Grand Juries to County Boards.

LEGISLATION OF 1879.—Parliament met on the 5th December, 1878, to receive from Her Majesty the announcement that the hostility to her Indian Government manifested by the Ameer of Afghanistan, and the manner in which he had repulsed her friendly Mission, had left her no alternative but to make a peremptory demand for redress. That demand had been disregarded, and Her Majesty had therefore directed that an expedition should be sent into the Ameer's territory, and had taken the earliest opportunity of calling them together, and making them the communication required by law. The time of the two Houses during the short sitting before Christmas was almost exclusively occupied by debates upon the question thus raised. The Opposition, who exhibited a great deal of irritation and violence, were signally defeated. The formal resolution, moved by Viscount Cranbrook in the House of Lords, to the effect that "The House consented that the revenues of India should be applied to defray the expenses of the military operations which might be carried on beyond the frontier of Her Majesty's Indian dominions," was met by an amendment, proposed by Viscount Halifax, declaring that the Government had unnecessarily engaged the country in the contest. The amendment was rejected by 201 to 65 votes—a majority far in excess of that which the Conservative party can claim to possess in the Upper House. In the Commons there were two debates. In the first—which arose upon an amendment to the report of the Address moved by Mr. Whitbread, disap-

ARMY DISCIPLINE AND REGULATION ACT—PROSECUTION OF OFFENCES ACT—SUMMARY JURISDICTION ACT—COMPANIES ACT—UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (IRELAND) ACT — NATIONAL SCHOOL TEACHERS' (IRELAND) ACT—ACT TO AMEND ARTISANS' AND LABOURERS' DWELLINGS' IMPROVEMENT ACT—PUBLIC HEALTH (INTERMENTS) ACT.

proving the conduct of the Government, which had resulted in the war—the Government had a majority of 101. In the second—in which Mr. Fawcett met a resolution moved by Mr. Stanhope of the same tenor as that adopted by the peers, with an amendment asserting the injustice of charging the revenues of India with the cost of the war—the majority for the Government was 110.

When the Session was resumed on the 13th February, 1879, Lord Beaconsfield and the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Bills which the Government proposed to lay before Parliament. The programme was neither lengthy nor sensational, but most of the measures promised were of much importance, and the general need felt for them seemed to render it almost certain that they would all become law. It consisted of the Army Discipline and Regulation Bill, by which it was proposed not only to obviate the necessity of carrying through Parliament every year long and wearisome Mutiny Bills, whilst reserving to it all that security and control which the annual Mutiny Bills were supposed to give, but to materially simplify and amend the whole military law. There was, further, a Bill for the Consolidation of the Criminal Law, or, in other words, Sir James Stephens' and the Attorney-General's Criminal Code, as revised by the Commission of Judges appointed to consider it. A Summary Jurisdiction Bill, a County Government Bill, a Bill for Amending and Continuing the Corrupt Practices Act, a Bill for altering the Law relating to Banking Companies—intended to facilitate, under sufficient securities, the transfer of unlimited into limited Banks—a Bill to alter in some important respects the system under which Public Loans are granted; and several of the *remanets* of former years—such as the Valuation Bill, the Patent Law Amendment Bill, and the Bankruptcy Bill, the latter materially amended—were also announced. This programme was, as we have said, a thoroughly practical one. It raised no great questions of principle, and hardly touched party issues. It made no excessive demand on the House of Commons. In the five or six months for which the Session might be expected to last, there was, after making every allowance for the already too evident purpose of the Opposition to

occupy a great deal of time with debates on foreign policy, not intended to affect the course of opinion in Parliament but to influence the country in view of the General Election—which, "measuring other people's corn by their own bushel," they fancied the Government would "spring" upon them—plenty of time to give all these measures ample consideration. It soon became apparent, however, that the Home Rulers, and the extreme section of the English Radical party, would do their utmost to prevent all legislation, and waste the Session. The purpose of the Home Rulers was that which inspired their action in previous Parliaments—to obstruct for the sake of obstruction; the purpose of the English Radicals was to prevent legislation, even when they admitted that legislation was necessary or desirable, in order that they might be able to include a "wasted Session," which they themselves had made, in their indictment against the Government. Thirty sittings were occupied with the Army Discipline and Regulation Bill—a measure which, as in its main features the outcome of the deliberations of a Select Committee presided over by Sir William Harcourt, might have been expected to meet with little opposition. Indeed, all the questions raised which were fairly debateable, might have been thoroughly threshed out in a couple of evenings. But Mr. Parnell and his little band fought the Bill clause by clause and line by line, and were from the first supported by the extreme section of English Radicals, of whom Mr. Peter Rylands, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and Mr. Peter Taylor are the most prominent representatives. For some time the nominal leaders of the Opposition, if they condescended to be present when the Bill was under discussion, professed to rebuke their followers; but at last they yielded to the pressure put upon them, and Lord Hartington, surrendering his own opinions to the dictation of Mr. Chamberlain, who had described him as the "late leader" of the Liberal Party, moved an amendment to the effect that no Bill for the discipline and regulation of the Army would be satisfactory which provided for the retention of corporal punishment for military offences. This resolution was rejected by a majority of 106, and the Bill was shortly after read a third time. It passed through the House of Lords without alteration or even

opposition, and must be esteemed one of the most useful chapters added to the Statute Book in recent years. It gives us, for the first time, an intelligible code of military law, whilst it in no degree interferes with the old privileges of Parliament, as it has to be re-enacted every year by a short Mutiny Act.

The time occupied by the Army Regulation Act, and by the idle discussions raised by the Radicals upon foreign questions, made it impossible for the Government to carry some of the most needed of the measures announced in February. The Bankruptcy Law Amendment Bill, for which the commercial community had asked so urgently, and which passed the House of Lords early in the Session, had to be withdrawn; and even the Criminal Law Consolidation Bill had to be dropped. The County Government Bill, the Grand Jury Law Amendment Bill, and the Valuation Bill shared the same fate.

But the Session, in spite of all these sacrifices and disappointments, was fruitful in that practical and most useful legislation which will be the honour of the present Government and of the Parliament which has so steadily supported it. We will mention, in the first place, the Prosecution of Offences and the Summary Jurisdiction Acts, which effect a great reform in the administration of the Criminal Law. The former supplies, in the clauses authorising the appointment of a Director of Public Prosecutions, with a certain number of assistants, a want which has long been felt, and, indeed, had recently become so urgent that the Government had found it necessary to instruct the Treasury Solicitor to prosecute in a number of cases. The Director of Public Prosecutions is, under the superintendence of the Attorney-General, and according to regulations made by him, or in special cases by his immediate direction, to institute criminal proceedings, or give advice or assistance where these proceedings have been already instituted. We have a guarantee, therefore, that the great criminals who have hitherto escaped punishment because their victims could not afford to take proceedings against them, will in future be brought to justice; and, on the other hand, we have in the clauses which enact that, if the Director should abandon a prosecution, the person who considers himself aggrieved

may proceed with it, and provide that nothing in the Act shall interfere with the right of individuals to institute, undertake, or carry on a criminal prosecution, sufficient security against the abuses which might result in this country, and continually occur on the Continent, from the omnipotence of a Public Prosecutor who is swayed by his political opinions and private friendships or animosities. The Summary Jurisdiction Act may be generally described—it is impossible to enter here upon a minute examination of its provisions—as a measure which, whilst it on the one hand gives in many cases to persons hitherto liable to summary jurisdiction, a right to claim a trial by jury, on the other hand, entrusts the magistrates who exercise summary jurisdiction, with large powers of mitigating the punishments which they were before bound to impose.

The Companies Act was not passed in the form in which it was introduced by Sir Stafford Northcote. Many of the clauses of the original Bill had to be abandoned, on account of the very short time left for their discussion—the Bill was only read a second time on the 29th July—but a measure was passed which fully provided for the immediate want which had to be met. By availing itself of the provisions of this Act, an unlimited banking company can register as a limited company, and in taking that step may increase the nominal amount of its capital, which increase of capital is only to be called up in the event of the company being wound up; or it may resolve that a portion of its uncalled up capital shall be "ear-marked" in the same manner as "reserve liability." But this is merely facultative. A banking company may register itself as limited without making any such reserve. That is a question between the shareholders and the creditors of the concern. The only restrictive provisions of the Act are, that no debts or contracts made before the registration as a limited company are to be affected by it, and that the limitation of liability is not to apply to the notes of the bank. Another clause provides that the accounts of every bank registering as "limited" under the Act, must be examined annually by an auditor or auditors elected by the shareholders. Already the directors of several of the largest Joint Stock Banks have recommended their

shareholders to adopt the Act; and it must, therefore, be taken to give bank shareholders the protection for which they have been asking without diminishing in any appreciable manner the security to bank customers.

The most important measure passed in the Session was, however, the University Education (Ireland) Act, which promises to settle, in a manner generally satisfactory, a most difficult question which has vexed statesmen for years. The measure was not mentioned in the programme of the 13th February, and was only introduced into the House of Lords on the 30th June. But it made its way pretty quickly through both Houses, the opposition with which a section of the Home Rulers had threatened it having been abandoned under the pressure, as it was understood, of the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops. The Act is, in some respects, but an outline which will have to be filled up by some money clauses. It authorises the Queen to establish a University in Ireland, which is to have power to grant degrees after examination to persons whom it may consider qualified; and no residence or attendance at lectures is to be obligatory on any candidates for a degree, except in medicine or surgery. The Queen's University is to be dissolved, and the Senate of the New University is to prepare a scheme for Exhibitions, Scholarships, Fellowships, and prizes. Of course any such scheme will need the creation of a charge on the Consolidated Fund, or an annual vote of the House of Commons, or some appropriation by Parliament from the Irish Church Fund; but there can be no doubt that in one of these ways the necessary funds will be promptly provided. Another Act for the encouragement of education in Ireland passed in this Session should be noted here. The position of the National School teachers—who receive, at the best, very scanty salaries, which allow no provision being made for sickness or old age—had long been urged upon the attention of Parliament. The National School Teachers' (Ireland) Act does justice to a most deserving class, and reflects great credit upon the Government. It constitutes a Pension Fund for the teachers, to which it applies the sum of £1,300,000 out of the Irish Church Fund, and secures to the teachers, from whose salaries a slight deduction is to be made as a contribution to the Fund, a

modest allowance after retirement from work on account of old age or infirmity. The Act amending the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875 removes two great hindrances to the operation of that measure. The arbitrators appointed under the Act to assess the value of the property to be taken under the different schemes for clearing sites, have considered themselves bound to give the owners, and other persons interested in the houses to be pulled down, the benefit of their own misdeeds. These owners or lessees had so crowded their houses with occupants, and so grossly neglected their sanitary condition, that the houses were condemnable under the Act. But by this conduct they had swollen the whole rental of these houses to a comparatively enormous amount, and they claimed compensation for their expropriation under the Act, on the basis of the rental they received; and the arbitrators, no doubt taking the proper legal view of the matter, allowed it them. The result has been, that the mere cost of clearing away the "rookeries," which the Board of Works, the City authorities, and the Municipalities of some of our large towns have obtained authority to remove, has proved even larger than would have been the removal of houses situated in respectable localities, and in good condition. The Act of 1879 provides that an arbitrator may receive evidence to prove that premises, on account of overcrowding, &c., had become a nuisance, and, if satisfied of the fact, may determine the cost of abating the nuisance, and fix the compensation to be paid for the house at the amount at which it might be taken to be worth after the abatement of the nuisance Another material amendment of the Act of 1875 is to allow the accommodation for the working classes which the former Act required to be upon precisely the area upon which the clearance was effected, to be provided, under certain safeguards, elsewhere. If we add that the Parliamentary Elections and Corrupt Practices Act was continued with an amendment providing that every Election Petition shall be tried before two Judges instead of one, we have described the legislation of the Session for which the Government may take credit and must be held responsible. But there is one Act of last Session which, although introduced by a private member, and carried through with only such facilities as

private members possess, deserves especial mention. We refer to Mr. Marten's Public Health (Interments) Act, which promises to practically settle the great burial question in a manner by no means satisfactory to the politicians who have so long traded on it. By applying the provisions of the Act of 1875, with regard to a place of reception for the bodies of the dead, "a mortuary," to a place for the interment of the bodies of the dead, "a cemetery," full power is given to local authorities generally to provide and maintain a cemetery wherever and whenever one may in their opinion be required. Local authorities are further allowed to accept donations of land offered them for such a purpose; and generally it may be said that, wherever the provisions of the Act are adopted, every shadow of a grievance which may have been felt by conscientious Dissenters will be removed. The Government, although it could give Mr. Marten no facilities for carrying his measure, warmly supported it; and, as soon as it became law, the Local Government Board issued a circular, drawing the attention of local authorities to the new duties it imposed upon them, and the new powers it gave them.

FINANCIAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION.

When Mr. Gladstone dissolved Parliament at the end of January, 1874, a few days before it was expected to meet for the dispatch of business, he hoped, as he explained in his long and tedious address to the electors of Greenwich, to win back the country to his side by the promise of a repeal of the Income Tax. The *coup*, suddenly as it fell upon the public, had been some time in preparation. Mr. Lowe, who had boldly said in the spring of 1873 that he intended to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in the following year, had been shifted in the autumn to the Home Office, and Mr. Gladstone had added to the office of First Lord of the Treasury that of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Lowe's Budgets were framed upon the principle of securing, by underestimating the receipts of the financial year, a surplus, to be boasted of in the financial statement of the following year as the result of Liberal financial administration. The system did not pass unchallenged. Liberal members of

Parliament protested against the maintenance of old taxation or the imposition of new taxes, intended only to give the Government the credit of a surplus, and Mr. Lowe had more than once to "take back his Budget." But he adhered to his plan; and when Mr. Gladstone dissolved in 1874, he was able to estimate, in his address to his electors, that the excess of normal revenue over normal expenditure would be five millions. The calculation was correct enough, although the payment of the Alabama Award and the cost of the Ashantee War, reduced the actual surplus of the year to a comparatively small sum. Sir Stafford Northcote, taking, as he was compelled to do, the Estimates his predecessor had prepared, found himself able to dispose of five millions. The country had the immediate benefit of that sum. Justice was done to legitimate claims, and at the same time a great, and, indeed, necessary source of revenue, like the Income Tax, was not abandoned altogether, as Mr. Gladstone, in a true gambler's spirit, had proposed. It must always be remembered that Mr. Gladstone had promised the abolition of the tax more than twenty years before, and had never shown himself, in all the years he had occupied the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer, disposed to redeem the promise. On the contrary, he had raised the tax to a rate unknown before in time of peace to maintain the "bloated armaments" of the Palmerston Ministry, and allow the repeal of taxes, which were not dealt with from economical or financial, but from political and party, reasons. He had supported Mr. Lowe in keeping the tax at a rate which he was himself compelled to allow was too high, and the offer to abolish it altogether was simply made as a means of maintaining himself in power. Sir Stafford Northcote maintained the tax, but reduced it by one penny, bringing it practically to a rate which did not injuriously press upon the payers, and he thus removed a strong incentive to evasion, whilst maintaining a machinery which is invaluable in the event of any great national emergency. Further, the Chancellor of the Exchequer repealed the sugar duties. There was, no doubt, some regret on the part of sound economists at the abandonment of such a thoroughly legitimate source of revenue, which was made all the more perilous by Mr. Gladstone's threat to get rid of the Income Tax. But the

fact was, that the duties had been so manipulated by Mr. Lowe, that, despite the considerable sum they brought into the Exchequer, it was hardly possible to maintain them. Mr. Lowe had reduced the sugar duties by one-half in 1870, with the declaration that he would not go any further. In 1873 he reduced them by one-half again, and Parliament was distinctly told by Mr. W. H. Smith that what remained of the duties after this operation was so small that they would have to be totally abolished. Sir Stafford Northcote further abolished the duty on horses, with several duties of a kindred character, the total amount of his reductions of taxation being for the year £4,020,000. He applied another million to the relief of local taxation, and so fulfilled, in a most striking manner, the pledges given by the Conservative leaders when in Opposition. By a contribution towards the cost of the maintenance of lunatics, by an increase of the subvention for the pay and clothing of the Police from 25 to 50 per cent., and by a further payment of rates on Government property, the Chancellor of the Exchequer accepted a burden for the year of £1,010,000, whilst relieving local taxation permanently by the very considerable sum of a million and a quarter. By these arrangements the Chancellor of the Exchequer was left with a small estimated surplus, which, in spite of some considerable Supplementary Estimates, proved to be larger when the accounts of the year were made up.

In 1875, Sir Stafford Northcote's Budget was what we may call a quiet one. It repealed only one small stamp duty, and what relief it gave was only to a small class. A very just alteration was made in the system upon which brewers are charged with duties upon the number of barrels of beer they brew; and a stamp duty upon appointments to the Civil Service, producing little, but often pressing very heavily upon those who had to pay it, was abolished. The principal feature of the Budget of 1875 was the scheme of Sir Stafford Northcote for a regular and steady reduction of the National Debt. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposal was the payment of a sum of twenty-eight millions regularly on account of the Debt. At the time he spoke, the annual charge of the Debt, including the exceptional expenditure

authorised by previous Parliaments for its reduction in the way of Terminable Annuities, was £27,250,000. By raising the annual payment from the Consolidated Fund to the National Debt Commissioners to £28,000,000, to which sum it was calculated it would only arrive in the course of the financial year, 1877-78, Sir Stafford Northcote hoped to reduce the Debt in thirty years by the very considerable sum of £162,000,000, altogether independently and apart from the other arrangements adopted for that purpose. The proposal of the Minister was hotly contested by the Opposition, Mr. Gladstone signalising himself by the vehemence of his objections, but it was well received by the House and the country; and the Government may be heartily congratulated upon the bold, judicious, and moderate scheme by which, at a really inappreciable cost to the taxpayers of the present day, it has provided for the extinction of so large a sum of debt in so short a time. An important item of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget proposals was the measure for regulating and improving the system upon which loans are granted by the Treasury, under the provisions of various Acts of Parliament, to public bodies and local authorities, which is known as the Public Works' Loans Act. This useful Act simplifies the national accounts, brings the advances clearly under view and control, and effects considerable economies.

The tide of abnormal and feverish prosperity which overspread Europe after the conclusion of peace between France and Germany, and which swelled so enormously the returns of the revenue during Mr. Gladstone's administration, was already rapidly receding when the present Government entered into office in the spring of 1874. In his first two years of office Sir Stafford Northcote was, however, able to make large remissions of taxation, whilst providing for the increased expenditure rendered necessary to put the Army and Navy (which Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe had starved) into a satisfactory condition; for the transfer of local charges to the National Exchequer, in favour of which the House of Commons had pronounced by an overwhelming vote when Mr. Gladstone boasted a majority of seventy or eighty; for the growth of the Education Vote, the necessary consequence of Mr.

Forster's Education Act; and for an honest and vigorous effort to reduce the National Debt. In 1876 the growth of these various charges, and the increasing depression of trade and commerce (felt in the cessation of that so-called elasticity of revenue which means, practically, the ability of the working classes to consume articles liable to duty—that is to say, speaking generally, beer, wines, spirits, and tobacco), compelled the Chancellor of the Exchequer, although his calculations had been fully realised, and the surplus of the year, in spite of large Supplemental Estimates, exceeded his original Budget calculation, to have recourse to additional taxation. The Estimates for the three great Services for the coming year (although only slightly in excess of the annual rate of augmentation under Mr. Gladstone's *régime*) showed so great an increase, that the comparison between the sum total of expenditure and the sum total of revenue Estimates showed a deficiency of three-quarters of a million. What was to be done? The expenditure was necessary. There could be no doubt about that. So the Chancellor had recourse to the ancient and, indeed, the only resource left to a Minister. He added to the Income Tax the penny he had taken off in 1874, but he increased at the same time the exemptions, and diminished the pressure upon the class which feels it most severely. The absolute exemption from the tax which Mr. Gladstone, with that utter want of practical acquaintance with the condition of the people which especially characterises him, had reduced to £100, was raised again to £150, and in place of the deduction of £80 before allowed on all incomes under £300, an allowance of £120 was made upon all incomes under £400. Mr. Gladstone, of course, vehemently opposed this proposition, and he was faithfully supported by his late colleagues. The House of Commons, however, thankfully accepted the measure, which, although it may not perhaps be easily justified theoretically, practically relieves the tax of its most oppressive features.

In his Budget for 1877, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—who found his Estimates for the past year, which had been attacked as extravagant and misleading in the House of Commons, with a

good deal of sound and fury, by the chiefs of the Opposition, verified in the most satisfactory manner—kept strictly to the arrangements of the previous year; imposing no new tax, and repealing only one—the Stamp Duty on Benefices, which pressed with extreme severity upon clergymen presented to small livings, whilst producing a revenue of only £6,000 a year.

Sir Stafford Northcote had reckoned in his Budget speech upon a surplus of a little more than £350,000 at the close of the year 1877-78. The expenditure, however, proved to be about £110,000 more than the Budget Estimate, although three-quarters of a million less than had been granted by Supplemental Estimates; so that the surplus, assuming the Estimate of revenue to have been exactly correct, would have been something more than £242,000. The revenue amounted, however, to some £617,000 above the Estimate, thus justifying the accuracy of the Chancellor's calculations; and there would, therefore, have been a surplus of £860,000 upon the year, but for the Vote of Credit for £6,000,000 granted by the House of Commons in February, 1878. At the close of the financial year, three millions and a-half had been expended in virtue of this credit, and there was consequently, upon the assumption that this extraordinary expenditure should be brought into the ordinary accounts of the year, a deficiency of £2,640,000. Sir Stafford Northcote's Estimate of Expenditure for the year 1878-1879, exclusive of a further sum of from a million to a million and a-half for extraordinary expenditure of the same kind as that made under the authority of the Vote of Credit, was £81,019,000. Taking the revenue, upon the assumption of no alteration in taxes or duties, at £79,460,000, here was a deficit of nearly £1,560,000 to provide for. By increasing the tax on dogs from 5s. to 7s. 6d., estimated to yield £100,000; increasing the duty on tobacco fourpence per pound, estimated to produce £750,000; and adding twopence to the Income Tax, the proceeds of which, for the current year, he took at £2,950,000—the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who sacrificed £30,000 by an exemption reducing the produce of the house-duty by that sum raised the revenue of the year to £83,230,000, leaving a surplus of £2,210,000. With this surplus and the extra

proceeds of the additional Income Tax for the current year, but only to be received in 1879-80, the legacy of £2,640,000 from 1877-78, and the estimated million or more of Supplemental Votes, would, with ordinary good fortune, have been provided for without adding a halfpenny to the public debt.

Unfortunately, the Supplemental Votes, which included three-quarters of a million, the cost of bringing the Indian troops to Malta and sending them back, amounted to £2,618,000, whilst a further sum of £400,000, on account of the war at the Cape, seemed, even at the close of the Session of 1878, likely to come upon the expenditure of the year 1878-79. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's surplus was, therefore, dissipated long before the time came for realising it, and the outbreak of the Zulu War—the news of which came so unexpectedly and disagreeably upon the Government, and necessitated a Vote of Credit for £1,500,000 in February—compelled the Chancellor of the Exchequer to preface his Budget statement for the year 1879-80 with the acknowledgment of a deficit on the financial year just closed of £2,292,000. The revenue had nearly reached his estimate, having amounted to £83,116,000, or £114,000 less than his calculation—a result principally due to the fact that the additional duty on tobacco yielded only £500,000 instead of the £750,000 it was expected to bring in. The expenditure, on the other hand, amounted to £85,407,000, or £4,388,000 more than Sir Stafford Northcote had anticipated at the commencement of the year. Coming to the current year, 1879-80, the Chancellor of the Exchequer estimated the revenue at £83,055,000, or about £60,000 less than the receipts of the last year; whilst he calculated the expenditure at £81,153,000, exclusive of such further charges for the Zulu War as might come upon the Exchequer in the course of the year. There was thus, according to his calculation, an apparent surplus of one million nine hundred thousand pounds, out of which he hoped that all further charges for the Zulu War would be met. Speaking on the 31st of July, 1879, a fortnight before the close of the Session, and after the news of the Battle of Ulundi had arrived, and the speedy termination of the war could safely be reckoned upon, Sir

Stafford Northcote estimated the cost of the war, so far as it would be a charge on the present financial year, at three millions, or one million one hundred thousand pounds more than the surplus which, he had assumed, would meet that outlay. As Supplementary Estimates, amounting practically—they appeared larger, but were reduced by cross entries—to £64,000, had been voted in the course of the Session, the deficit upon the current year, assuming expenditure and revenue to exactly conform to this latest edition of the Estimates, will be £1,163,000, which sum Sir Stafford Northcote hopes that he will recover from the Cape Colonies. We trust that this hope may be justified; but it can hardly be expected that any portion of the sum the Government claims from the colonies will be received in time to allow of its appearance in the accounts of the current year, and unless, therefore, savings in other branches of expenditure larger than it would be safe to reckon upon have been effected, we must look forward to a deficit, which, in view of the diminution in yield of two of the main sources of revenue (Customs and Excise), may amount to a million and a-half. Assuming this to be the result, the accumulated deficit of these three years will amount to £6,430,000. That is to say, that for the assertion of the interests of England in the East, the preservation of the peace of Europe, and the successful conduct of a war in South Africa, for which the Government is not responsible, but which events have shown was absolutely necessary for the protection of the colonies, the country will have added to one form of its debt about six millions sterling, whilst it has reduced it in other forms, and almost entirely through the measures taken by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, nearly seventeen millions and a-half. The net apparent decrease of the debt is comparatively small. The real decrease consists in the fact that for more than sixteen millions of what now figures as national debt, the Government has absolute security, and receives a larger interest than it pays. The outcry raised against the Government in this matter of the debt has as much, and no more, foundation than would have the charge of extravagance against a landowner because he had added five thousand pounds to his debt to his bankers, at the same time that he paid off a

mortgage of seventeen or eighteen thousand pounds. Indeed, this illustration does not thoroughly represent the case. More than a million and a-half of the Vote of Credit for six millions, the whole of which sum is included in the account of expenditure which we have given, was devoted to the purchase of ironclad vessels built by private firms, which have added greatly to the strength of the Navy ; and further, every year from 1875 to the present, there has been an expenditure of considerably more than a million over the highest sum devoted to the purpose by Mr. Gladstone's Government for the construction and repair of ships. The increase of the unfunded debt, such as it is, might fairly be compared to a loan incurred by a landed proprietor in order to effect most valuable improvements upon his estate.

A desperate effort has been made by Mr. Gladstone, who remains the real leader of the Opposition, and his lieutenants, Messrs. Lowe, Childers, and Dodson, to establish a charge of extravagant expenditure against the present Government, and to represent it as adding to the burthens of the people, whereas Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe were continually reducing them. There is not the slightest justification for the charge. There is no doubt, of course, that the expenditure is greater now than it was in the year 1873-74, but this no more proves that the expenditure is unnecessary, extravagant, or more burdensome to the people than the addition of the cost of collecting the revenue, which used to be deducted from the gross receipts, to the estimates of expenditure, proves that the expenditure has increased. The Tories have added, Mr. Gladstone says, eight and a quarter millions to the annual expenditure. These figures are grossly incorrect; but if we accept them, to what would the charge amount? The question for the country is not whether more money is spent now upon the Army and Navy, in the reduction of the Debt, upon education, and in relief of local taxation, than during Mr. Gladstone's administration ; but whether the additional expenditure is necessary, and has been judiciously made ? That question is answered in the most satisfactory manner by an analysis of the figures upon which the opponents of the Government profess to rest their case. Mr. Gladstone, whose usual tactics are to obscure all questions in a foam of high-sounding words,

ventured during his recent campaign in Midlothian upon specific charges against the financial policy of the Government, with a result which will probably induce him to return to his old system of vague and sweeping indictments. He compared the expenditure of the last year of his own Government, 1873-4, with the expenditure of 1878-9, and crediting himself with what he called the extraordinary expenditure of the year, such as the payment of the Alabama Award, and a payment on account of the Ashantee War, but giving the present Government no credit for its extraordinary expenditure for the Zulu War (which it as little desired as Mr. Gladstone did the Ashantee War, for which, however, he was distinctly responsible), or the expenditure necessitated by the events in Eastern Europe, he denounced the Government for having wantonly added more than eight millions to the national expenditure. Mr. Gladstone's attack, which was full of extraordinary blunders and mis-statements, such as the assertion that the Income Tax had been raised to sixpence, was promptly met by Sir Stafford Northcote, who explained very clearly at Leeds how the increase of expenditure, which was not eight millions and a quarter, but seven millions and a-half, had been caused. Two million three hundred thousand pounds are ascribed to an increase of the charges for the Army and Navy; three millions and a-half represent the increased charge upon the Civil Service Estimates, on account of Mr. Forster's Education Act, and the relief of local taxation at the expense of the National Exchequer; whilst one million nine hundred and thirty-seven thousand pounds are attributable to an increase of charge for the management and redemption of the Debt. The increase in the Army and Navy charges needs no elaborate justification. It would have been in large part necessary, even if the state of affairs in Europe during the last three years had not compelled the Government to put both forces in a condition for immediate action. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe, in order to manufacture their bogus surpluses, had reduced the Navy to such a wretched condition, that in the last year of their administration they were compelled to largely increase the Estimates by an augmentation of the Vote for the construction and repair of ships. Still, so far had the mischief gone that Mr. Ward Hunt found, as

he declared in the House of Commons, only a "phantom fleet," and was obliged to take immediate measures to increase the number of ships, and put those already available into proper condition.

The increase in the Army charges has been quite as imperative. Lord Cardwell left the Army in a most disorganised and dissatisfied condition. Officers and men were alike discontented. Many of our regiments were mere skeletons; our best non-commissioned officers and private soldiers were leaving the Service as fast as they could, and such recruits as could be obtained were mere boys. Mr. Hardy set himself at once to work to improve the condition of the Service. He accepted frankly and loyally the changes so wantonly introduced by Lord Cardwell. To have returned to the state of things which existed before would have been to make confusion worse confounded. He gradually, but surely, redressed the grievances of all ranks, and increased the inducements to enter the Army. The Regimental Exchanges Act, founded upon the report of a Royal Commission appointed by Lord Cardwell, which said that the prohibition of paying and receiving money for exchanges between officers on full pay was a serious hardship to some and a serious loss to others, removed a grievance which caused great discontent; whilst the Army Promotion and Retirement Act secured at a considerable cost to the country that flow of promotion so necessary to the efficiency and satisfaction of the Service which the Purchase System supplied, and which Lord Cardwell, in abolishing purchase, promised should be maintained. Mr. Hardy also did much to make the Army Reserve a reality. But the most important of his measures is undoubtedly the increase of pay to the private soldiers and to the non-commissioned officers, which he carried through in 1876. He gave the men, in addition to their present pay, a deferred pay of 2d. per day, so that at the end of their six years' service there is a sum of £18 to their credit. A stronger inducement to good conduct and a better check upon desertion can hardly be imagined than this measure. Further, Mr. Hardy added a penny to the pay of the Guards, has given lance-corporals and lance-sergeants, who hitherto had performed onerous duties for nothing, the pay of their ranks, and has increased generally

the pay of that most important class, the non-commissioned officers.

In the Civil Expenditure a million and a-half of the increase is due to the operation of the Education Act. For this piece of extravagance—if extravagance it be—Mr. Gladstone himself, and his colleagues in the late Government, are in the first place responsible. The other two millions represent charges previously paid out of the rates, but transferred by the action of the present Government, and almost without opposition from Mr. Gladstone and his friends, to the National Exchequer ; they are therefore not an addition to, but a change in the incidence of, the national burthens. Indeed, this amount of two millions now paid out of the Treasury falls far short of the whole diminution of local taxation, and the full saving to the ratepayers. The transfer to the Government of the management of prisons throughout the United Kingdom, enabled a large reduction to be made in the cost of maintenance, and we should be speaking quite within bounds if we were to estimate the actual relief to the taxpayers in the shape of a reduction of the demand upon them for rates and local charges, at two and a-half millions.

The increase of charge for the National Debt, £1,937,000, seems at first sight to give some justification for Mr. Gladstone's accusations ; but when the figures are examined they will be found to redound very much to the credit of the Government. The only portion of this increase for which the Government is responsible, beyond the small sum of £129,000, the interest upon the Exchequer Bonds issued on account of the two Votes of Credit, is an amount of between six and seven hundred thousand pounds, which Parliament in 1875, on the proposition of Sir Stafford Northcote, voted, by raising the charge for the permanent debt to a fixed sum in excess of that required, for the gradual reduction of the Debt. The balance of the increased charge is merely a matter of account. The sum it represents is the interest the Government pays for the moneys it has borrowed, under the provisions of Acts like the Education Act, to lend to local bodies, or to invest under the direction of Parliament, as in the case of the Suez Canal, and for which an entry, approximately equivalent, appears on the

revenue side of the national balance-sheet. So far from having any need to shun inquiry into the comparative amounts of the Debt, and the comparative annual charges for it at the time they entered into office, and at the present day, Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues may point to the diminution they have effected in the Debt as one of the many proofs of the soundness of their financial policy. To have reduced the national indebtedness in all its forms, including not only the so-called permanent debt—a comparison confined to which would be much more favourable to them—but all kinds of unfunded debt and other obligations and liabilities, by the sum of ten millions two hundred and forty-two thousand pounds, in the course of these three troubled years, whilst putting the Army and Navy into a thoroughly effective condition, incurring an extraordinary expenditure of something like eight millions to maintain English interests in the East, adding a million and a-half yearly to the Education Vote, and transferring two millions of local taxation every year to the charge of the Treasury, and to have done it all in a time of commercial and agricultural depression, in a time of falling Revenue receipts, is an achievement of which any Ministry might be proud, and one which no Liberal Ministry ever accomplished. But this is just what has been done by the present Government, as has been shown by Mr. Hubbard in the most valuable letters he has published in the *Times*—not to defend Conservative Finance, but to point out what is the exact amount of the national revenue and expenditure after removing the mere cross and book-keepers' entries, and what is the amount of the national indebtedness, after taking due credit for the claims which the country has against those local bodies to lend to which it has increased the National Debt. The financial position of the country was never sounder than it is at the present time. Efficiency has been secured without any neglect of economy, and the public burdens are now considerably less than they were when Mr. Gladstone left office. If the revival of trade, which seems to have commenced, should continue, the revenue will doubtless advance by "leaps and bounds," as it did in the prosperous times in which it was the fortune of the Liberals to be in power, and the Government of the day will be able to make large remissions of taxation. It is enough for the present to remember

that, whilst the Government has met great and extraordinary charges, and reduced the national indebtedness more than seventeen millions, in spite of the revenue having fallen in consequence of commercial and agricultural distress, it, during the first part of its tenure of office, removed taxes amounting to just four millions and three-quarters per annum, and that even now, when it has, been compelled to impose additional taxation, the comparison between the amount of taxes removed and taxes put on shows that the additional burden is not even, taking the official estimates, a million, whilst in effect it has been much less. The million has not been put upon the poor and struggling, but upon the well-to-do and rich.

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL POLICY.—The purchase of the late Khedive of Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal was the first practical demonstration of the intention of the Conservative Government to take a wider and nobler view of English interests and English duties than Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues had ventured upon. When it was announced that the English Government had purchased these shares, which represent something more than two-fifths of the original capital of the Canal Company, the approbation of the public was singularly unanimous. The Liberal newspapers outstripped the Conservative in their enthusiasm over this "bold, wise, and statesmanlike" proceeding, which was described as securing our road to India, and protecting any interests of England which might be threatened by the reviving Eastern Question. The shares which the Khedive had to sell, and which, if they had not been bought by the English Government, would have fallen into the hands of a French Syndicate, were 176,602 in number. They bore no interest, the Khedive having sacrificed to the Company the coupons for twenty-five years, but by the arrangement made with him he undertook to pay £200,000, or five per cent., upon the purchase-money during the nineteen years for which the shares would still, by his contract with the Company, bear no interest. By the plan which the Government adopted for raising the purchase money, the country will, at the end of thirty-seven years, have the

shares as its property without having paid a farthing for them, upon the well-justified assumption that the Khedive pays the interest for the nineteen years, and that the Canal pays a dividend of five per cent. for the following eighteen years. What England really gets for this outlay, if outlay it can be called, is a two-fifths part of a great undertaking, the cost and value of which are by no means shown by the original share or loan capital. The Khedive gave the Company land which will prove of great value, and he gave it, too, the forced labour of his unhappy subjects. The mere pecuniary advantage of the purchase is, however, its smallest title to public approval. By becoming the owner of so large a number of shares, the English Government acquires a power over the management of the Canal which will prevent any administration of it injurious to English interests. It is quite true that the English Government is not represented upon the Board of Management of the Company in proportion to its holding, but its power is not the less felt, and as its only object can be to secure the maintenance of the Canal in good condition, and keep it open for the transit of ships of all nations on fair terms, there is not any room for serious conflict of opinion between its nominees and the other directors. In the last resort, and if war or other difficulties should come, England is quite strong enough to take charge of, and administer for the benefit of those whom it may concern, a property in which she is the largest holder. The Opposition leaders put themselves, in the discussion of this question, in direct antagonism to the feeling of the country. They denounced the purchase of the shares in itself, first as a challenge to other countries, and then as a wasteful expenditure. The policy of the Government was now too bold and reckless, and now too weak and timid. One day the Government was arraigned for taking Egypt under its protection, and the next it was denounced for making a bargain which gave it no real control over the Canal. Then the bargain itself was criticised in a huckstering spirit; the shares, the Opposition leaders said, might have been bought cheaper, and the commission paid to Messrs. Rothschild was too great. Nothing in the way of objection was too extravagant or too contemptible for Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Lowe,

and the Marquis of Hartington; but the only result of their opposition to the purchase was to discredit them with the country, and to induce the general belief that if they had continued in power England would have neglected a great opportunity.

The annexation of the Fiji Islands, a measure long demanded as well in Imperial as colonial interests, must be placed to the credit of the Government. Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues showed themselves desirous to diminish rather than increase our colonial possessions. For them the Empire was too great a burden. The colonies did not exactly pay. Indeed, their policy, except that they would have wished the colonies to quit the Imperial connection of their own motion, was very much that of the statesmen of the last century, who did not believe in colonies which did not pay every farthing they cost, and so lost England what were then her best and richest possessions.

The scheme for a confederation of South Africa, to include not only the British colonies, but the Dutch Independent Republics, met at first with a good deal of opposition. The leading politicians of the Cape Colony did not like it; it would have merged them in a crowd of politicians, the leadership of whom they could only have assumed by the exhibition of special Parliamentary or administrative abilities; and the Dutch Republics were too much enamoured of their own way of warfare and their own independence. But later events have convinced even the strongest opponents of the scheme of its wisdom; and the annexation of the Transvaal Republic, which the anarchy prevailing there, and the hopeless contest into which the Boers had wantonly entered with the neighbouring native tribes, rendered necessary, has prepared the way for the welding together of the whole of that part of South Africa which is inhabited by Europeans in one great federation.

How necessary the annexation of the Transvaal was, and how great was the peril in which the Boers had put not only themselves, but the English colonists round about them, by their reckless policy, the Zulu War has sufficiently shown. The military organisation of King Cetewayo, whom the Boers foolishly provoked, and who, beginning to feel his power, had talked of washing the spears

of his soldiers in the white men's blood, had long been a danger to the colony of Natal. Sir Bartle Frere deemed the danger immediate, and although, when he sent, towards the end of the year 1878, a kind of *ultimatum* to Cetewayo, in which he demanded satisfaction for certain outrages committed on the frontier, and the disbandment of the King's army, and upon the rejection of his demands commenced war, he had no authority from the Government to take such action, there can be no doubt that he acted with a full knowledge of impending danger, and the subsequent difficulties experienced by the troops under Lord Chelmsford only confirm the view which he took of the situation. Sir Bartle Frere's error was, not that he over-estimated the danger, but that he underrated it. He had no sufficient idea of the discipline and courage of the Zulu army. There was at the time a larger force of English troops in South Africa than any Governor-General was likely, for a long time to come, to have at his disposal, and he no doubt calculated that with this force he could easily compel Cetewayo to accept his terms. Sir Bartle Frere's miscalculation or indiscretion has been of the greatest service to the whole of our South African colonies, and consequently to the mother country. The danger, the extent of which can hardly be over-estimated, has been dispelled, and at a cost far less than would have been required if the struggle had been put off. The power of England has been exhibited in the most unmistakable manner. The Zulu army, after a disaster to our troops deeply to be regretted on account of the loss of brave men it involved, and ever memorable for the indecent and unpatriotic manner in which it was "*exploited*" by the Opposition, was thoroughly defeated and scattered on all sides. King Cetewayo is a prisoner. His country has been divided between chieftains whose policy is marked out for them by the English Government, and who are to be controlled by English Residents. As the chief of another tribe and race, Secocoeni, whom the Boers in their arrogance had also provoked, has been captured, and his army destroyed or dispersed, there remains no other element of disturbance in South Africa than the discontent of the Transvaal Boers. That discontent arises entirely from the protection which British rule gives the natives, whom the

Boers — whose cause Radical and Home Rule Members of Parliament are fond of advocating—have been accustomed to treat practically as slaves. But this discontent, which has been very much magnified by some newspapers, is not at all dangerous. The Boers will have to content themselves, and the great majority of them are already content, with the freedom British rule gives them, and accept its obligations. We cannot restore to them a so-called independence which was a scandal upon civilisation.

THE EASTERN QUESTION.—It is impossible to treat adequately of the policy of the Government on the Eastern Question within the limits of this pamphlet. The foreign policy of the Government has been clear, straightforward, and consistent throughout; and although we cannot pretend, as we have said, to give here anything like a full exposition of that policy, or a sufficient record of the signal successes achieved by it, we may describe in broad outline its principal incidents and its decisive triumph.

When the disturbances in Bosnia and the Herzegovina first broke out in the Summer of 1875, nothing was wanting for their suppression—they arose nominally out of the exactions of the tithe-farmers—but a little energy on the part of the Porte and scrupulous fair dealing on the part of Austria. But the Porte was weak, and Austria, too, was weak; and Lord Derby, who had frankly said to the Turkish Government, "Put down this insurrection, and at the same time redress all the grievances which induced it," found himself practically compelled to give his support to that Andrassy Note which recommended to the Porte reforms which were made impossible by the fact that they emanated from an agreement of the three Northern Powers, of which Russia was really the author. It was clear for the Porte, then, that the insurrection was no mere protest against bad government. It was the commencement of a fresh campaign against Turkish rule in Europe. The Porte accepted the Andrassy Note, but the insurgents repudiated it. Then came the Berlin Memorandum, marking most clearly the character of the insurrection, and really aiming, as Lord Derby said, at the occupation of Turkish territory

by Russia and Austria. Any participation in this scheme was naturally rejected by the English Government; and then came the events which are still fresh in the recollection of every reader, the participation of Servia and Montenegro in the war, the Turkish victories, the Russian ultimatum, the Conference, and the War.

The policy of the English Government has been throughout consistent. It warned the Porte so far back as May, 1876, before the fleet was sent to Besika Bay, that it could not protect it against its own misconduct. It made it quite clear that England would never fight for Turkey, even if the maintenance of English and European interests made it necessary for her to act in opposition to Russia. This warning was often repeated by Lord Derby, and, when the Conference of Constantinople met, the Sultan and his Ministers were given, not more clearly, but more directly, to understand that England would regard with the greatest dissatisfaction the refusal of the reforms proposed, and must leave them to meet any attack which that refusal might precipitate. The Porte, however, refused to accept the scheme of the Conference, which, it must be allowed, was hardly put in the form calculated to make its acceptance probable, whilst declaring its determination to adopt certain reforms which would undoubtedly have vastly improved the condition of the people, whether Mohammedan or Christian. The English Government would have left the Porte to carry out these schemes, but that did not suit the purpose of the Russian Government, which, secure of the neutrality of Germany, was resolved upon war. General Ignatieff made a round of the capitals of Europe to propose the adoption of a protocol, which, professedly intended "to terminate the incident" of the Conference, was to take note of the Turkish promises of reform, and leave it to the Powers to watch events and reserve their action in the matter. The English Government had no objection to sign such a protocol if Russia would formally engage to disarm, but this Russia would not do, and finally a protocol was signed at London on the 31st March, 1877, in the main corresponding to the Russian draft, but accompanied by a declaration on the part of Count Schouvaloff, which amounted simply to this, that the

Sultan might send an Ambassador to St. Petersburg to treat of a mutual disarmament. As the French Ambassador pointed out, this declaration was not calculated to spare the susceptibilities of the Porte, which would not accept the protocol, and the Russian Government had its pretence for the declaration of war which soon followed. The English Government severely condemned this conduct of the Russian Government, which Lord Derby showed had no warrant for the allegations it put forward in defence of its conduct, and had committed a gross breach of its Treaty obligations. Lord Derby and his colleagues, however, determined to remain neutral so long as certain special English interests, set out in a despatch dated the 6th of May, were not affected.

Meantime the Opposition—or, to speak more correctly, Mr. Gladstone and his immediate friends—had been doing their utmost to help the designs of Russia—in the first instance, to justify her declaration of war; and in the second place, to drag England behind what it was assumed would be the Czar's triumphal chariot. The war went on, with the result that every day the English people, at first disposed to look indifferently upon the contest and take no part in it, recognised more and more the injustice of the Russian pretensions, and the danger threatening English interests in the triumph of the Russian armies, until at last the Turks were defeated everywhere, the Russians advanced within sight of Constantinople, and the Sultan sued for peace. The imminence of this catastrophe, the necessity of preparing to protect English interests, which, from the complete overthrow of the Turks, were likely to be gravely imperilled in any Treaty imposed by Russia, induced the Government to summon Parliament for an earlier date than usual. The two Houses met on the 17th January, 1878, and on the 24th the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that on the following Monday he would move a Supplementary Vote for Naval and Military Services. The same day Lord Carnarvon—who had offered his resignation once before, when it was proposed that the British Fleet should enter the Dardanelles, and had before that received a severe rebuke from the Premier for a most indiscreet and unfair statement of his own opinions, delivered, as if commissioned by the Government, to a

deputation which waited upon him upon a subject of an altogether different kind—resigned, and his resignation was accepted.

The Vote of Credit for £6,000,000, proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was granted, after debates which set in a remarkable light the factious conduct of the Opposition. Mr. Forster raised a discussion of six nights by an amendment affirming that there was no occasion for the Vote, and practically expressing approval of the Russian terms of peace; and although he withdrew the amendment at the instance of Lord Hartington, his followers took a division on it, and raised other debates, in which Mr. Gladstone made passionate speeches in opposition to the Government and the Vote. Meantime the English Fleet had entered the Dardanelles, the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano had been published, and Austria had proposed a Congress, to which the English Government had agreed, upon the condition that the whole of the Treaty of San Stefano should be submitted to its consideration. To this demand Russia returned a practical refusal, and the Government of Lord Beaconsfield called out the Reserve Forces. This step cost the Ministry the resignation of Lord Derby, whose difference with his colleagues appears to have been this, that whilst he was quite at one with them as to the object to be attained—he insisted very strongly upon the submission of the whole of the Treaty of San Stefano to the Congress—he was not prepared to agree to the only means by which that object could be attained. A remarkable despatch, in which the Marquis of Salisbury, who succeeded the Earl of Derby as Foreign Secretary, stated the position and summed up the demands of England, produced a great effect upon all the Continental Governments, and contributed largely to obtain for the Government that overwhelming popular support which never failed it in the subsequent stages of the question. The two Houses of Parliament thanked Her Majesty for calling out the Reserves, after debates in which the Opposition only demonstrated their own weakness, and the announcement that Indian troops had been called to Malta, although much grumbled at in both Houses, was decisively approved by Parliament, and heartily applauded by the public.

The blow struck home at St. Petersburg. Count Schouvaloff, who had been summoned there by the Emperor, returned to London towards the end of May with most conciliatory instructions. The demands of the British Government were accepted. The whole Treaty of San Stefano was to be submitted to the Congress, to the meeting of which there was now no obstacle. The Earl of Beaconsfield and the Marquis of Salisbury represented this country at Berlin, and achieved the most signal triumph of which English policy can boast during the last sixty years. The Government may proudly claim for itself this credit, that without the loss of a single man and at an expenditure of less than a twentieth part of the sum engulfed in the Crimean War, it forced Russia to content herself, although her armies were already at the gates of Constantinople, with some comparatively small acquisitions of territory in Asia Minor, and to accept a settlement of the Eastern Question, one chief result of which must be to destroy every hope of the extension of her empire to the Bosphorus and the Ægean, and render vain all the dreams her rulers have so long indulged in of reigning at Constantinople and dominating the Mediterranean. We have described in detail elsewhere* the character of the changes made by the Treaty of Berlin in the settlement Russia attempted to impose at San Stefano. We need only say now, that the Treaty and the Convention of Constantinople, by which we have acquired possession of Cyprus and taken guarantees for the better government of Asia Minor, have thoroughly approved themselves. The difficulties which have been met with in the execution of some of the stipulations of the Treaty were no greater than had been anticipated, and the prophecies of failure and disaster, in which Sir William Harcourt and other leaders of the Opposition indulged, have been signally falsified.

All those stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin which materially affected the Treaty of San Stefano, and were intended to provide security against any further attempt of Russia to realise her ambitious aspirations, have been completely carried out; the objects with which the English Government demanded the revision of the terms imposed upon Turkey by Russia in a

* "The Treaty of Berlin and the Convention of Constantinople."

Congress, and Lords Beaconsfield and Salisbury went to Berlin to assert, have been entirely achieved. Such provisions of the Treaty as have not yet been carried out in their integrity, like the settlement of the frontier of Greece and Turkey, and the delimitation of Montenegro, only concern the English Government so far as it is one of the parties to the settlement at Berlin. Whatever their conclusion, no English interest will, even in the remotest manner, be affected. The Government has secured all that it insisted upon at Berlin, all that in English interests particularly, and European interests generally, it proposed to accomplish, when it demanded that the compact between Turkey and Russia should be revised by a European tribunal, and prepared to enforce its demand.

THE AFGHAN WAR.—The announcement that the Government of India had addressed something like an ultimatum to the Ameer of Afghanistan, although it came as a surprise upon the public generally, was not unexpected by those who had watched the course of affairs in Central Asia. As Sir Henry Rawlinson has said: "There have been for some years two distinct elements of mischief ever present and ever threatening danger—the intractable character of the ruler of Afghanistan and the persistent advance of Russia towards the Indian borderlands." The intractability of the Ameer, and his dislike and distrust of England, were the fault of our English Radical Governments. The advance of Russia is a danger which they have recognised, but have never screwed up courage to take precautions against. The policy of "masterly inactivity" pursued by Lord Lawrence, and which practically consisted in the declaration that the Indian Government could give no help, not even that of moral influence, to the settlement of the war of succession in Afghanistan, and the offensive announcement to Shere Ali that it would recognise any person who might obtain possession of the throne quite as readily as himself, naturally irritated the Ameer. The Indian Government of that day insisted that he was bound at all times and in all circumstances, by the engagement of his father, made in the Treaty of 1855, to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies

of the Indian Government, but it declined to recognise any corresponding obligation on its own part, and substantially said that its alliance was to be only with the winning side. Lord Mayo removed some of the distrust felt by the Ameer, and whilst refusing some rather extravagant demands made by him, led him to believe that he could rely upon the friendship of the English Government. The Ameer was not, indeed, quite satisfied, for the English Government refused him certain guarantees which he asked, but he still desired to be on friendly terms with us.

The advance of the Russians in Central Asia, which Liberal statesmen and Liberal newspapers are never weary, as if they had received a word of command from St. Petersburg, of proclaiming a mere development of civilisation rather advantageous than injurious to our rule in India, began, in 1873, to alarm Shere Ali. The capture of Khiva and the practical subjection of the Khanate —for the independence left a portion of it is but a phantom of diplomacy—led him to estimate very closely the value of the alliance with England concluded by Dost Mohammed, and which still subsisted. He sent a special envoy to Simla to put the matter before the Indian Government. Lord Northbrook seems to have been disposed to proffer the Ameer the assistance of the Government of India against unprovoked aggression, although it is difficult, after the letters and speeches of Lord Northbrook, to know what he really did intend. It is certain, however, that Mr. Gladstone's Government "pooh-poohed" the whole difficulty. There was no danger, it said, of Russian interference with Afghanistan. Its members could of their own knowledge guarantee the Czar's love of peace, and, above all, they could not commit themselves to anything which might have made it necessary to raise the Estimates. However, they instructed Lord Northbrook to say, and his Lordship seems to have said, that if the Ameer would "refer," in the case of any actual or threatened aggression by Russia, to the British Government, it would endeavour, by every means in its power, to settle the matter and avert hostilities. The Ameer, who knew how General Kaufmann was in the habit of making war, was naturally not assured by such a vague and meaningless declaration, and seems from that moment to have come to the

conclusion that his only safety ay in securing the friendship of Russia. When the Government of Lord Beaconsfield assumed power, in the spring of 1874, Lord Northbrook was still Governor-General of India, and it was in vain that the Marquis of Salisbury, who, with his colleagues, saw the danger of throwing the Ameer into the Russian camp, urged the necessity of taking measures to secure his friendship or prevent him from doing mischief. Lord Northbrook did not question the desirability of what the Home Government recommended, but he did not see the immediate necessity for taking any steps in the matter, and he had no fear of the Russian advance, and altogether—that was always his plea—the season was not a convenient one for doing anything. The English Government meanwhile had, however, seen more and more distinctly the danger of the position, and Lord Lytton went out to India with instructions to secure the friendship of the Ameer, or, failing that, to prevent Afghanistan being used by Russia to menace or disturb British India. He was authorised to offer the Ameer substantial pecuniary aid, the formal recognition of his dynasty—for which he had before asked in vain—and an explicit pledge of material support in case of unprovoked foreign aggression. But the Ameer had already thrown in his lot with Russia. He had already received a number of communications from General Kaufmann, which the Russian commander violated the understanding between his own Government and that of England in making. The overtures of the Viceroy were rejected under one excuse or other. The Ameer refused to receive a British Envoy even temporarily in his territory; and so matters stood when, in the summer of 1878, a Russian Mission was ostentatiously welcomed at Cabul. After that it was necessary for the English Government to act immediately and vigorously. The Viceroy at once announced to the Ameer his intention to send a Mission to Cabul, headed by an officer of rank, Sir Neville Chamberlain. The departure of the Mission was announced in sufficient time to enable the Ameer to make all proper arrangements for its reception; but when Major Cavagnari, who preceded Sir Neville Chamberlain, arrived at Ali Musjid, a passage was refused the Mission. No more distinct

act of hostility could have been shown by the Ameer. To have tolerated it would have been to throw Afghanistan into the arms of Russia, and to have suffered a loss of prestige in our own Indian dominions, the disastrous effect of which can hardly be exaggerated. However, the Home Government, consulted by the Viceroy, gave the Ameer an opportunity of apology and submission. He did not avail himself of it, and English troops at once occupied the passes through which an enemy might have advanced upon India. When they marched towards Cabul in the spring, they met with little resistance; Shere Ali had fled to Turkestan long before their approach, leaving all authority in the hands of his son, Yakoob Khan. The death of Shere Ali, which took place very soon after his flight from Cabul, left Yakoob Khan with as complete authority over Afghanistan as any ruler of that turbulent country can hope to enjoy; and in May he came into the English camp at Gundamak, and there concluded a peace, which recognised his sovereignty over Afghanistan, but left England in possession of the frontier, which the best military authorities had declared to be necessary and desirable. In accordance with the Treaty, and at the urgently expressed wish of the Ameer himself, Major Cavagnari, whose services had been recognised by signal honours, went to Cabul as English Resident. His reception was at first perfectly satisfactory; but on the 3rd September, certain regiments, whether mutinying for want of pay, or paid to commit the outrage, besieged the house in which the English Resident and his suite were quartered, and after a long and desperate fight, in which Sir Louis Cavagnari and his companions bore themselves nobly, murdered them. This outrage was soon avenged. The troops which were retiring on India, turned their faces again towards Cabul, and although the numerical strength of the force under General Roberts was small, and the road was most difficult, he entered Cabul on the 12th October, little more than a month after the crime had been committed which he went to punish. Yakoob Khan, the extent of whose complicity in the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari has not yet been determined, had come into the English camp some time before the army reached Cabul, and all resistance seemed to

have been abandoned. A subsequent combination of tribes, which the General does not seem to have been prepared for, compelled Sir Frederick Roberts to abandon Cabul, entrench himself in the Sherpur cantonments, and ask for reinforcements. Before, however, the reinforcements reached him, he had inflicted upon the Afghans the most decisive defeat they have ever sustained at our hands. They at once dispersed, and although slight attacks upon our positions — highland raids they may be called — are now and then reported, our authority is firmly established, and the only question which now remains to be determined is by what territorial and other arrangements the purposes for which we originally went to war—namely, the establishment of our exclusive control over the Foreign policy of Afghanistan, and the absolute protection of our Indian frontier—can be most efficaciously and economically insured.

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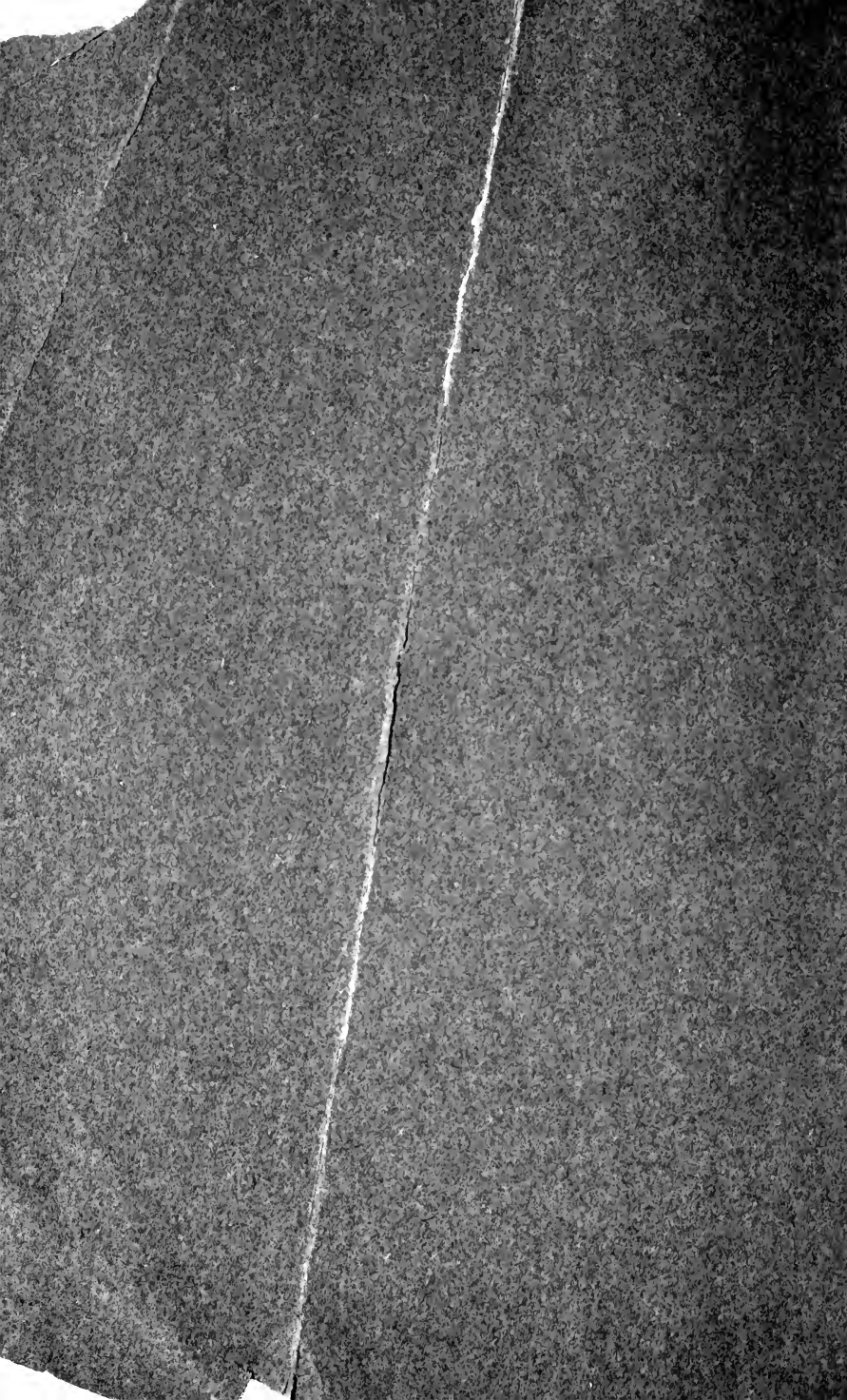
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